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Sermons on the Gospels

ADVENT TO TRINITY

BY

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Pastor Trinity Church, Reading, Pennsylvania

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PREFACE

The sermons contained in this volume were preached in the Church of the Holy Communion, Philadelphia, to a congregation consisting in part of University and college students. In preaching it was impossible to disassociate from my mind the struggles through which many of these young people were passing and the battles which I was asked to help them fight during the week. This fact, if borne in mind, will help the reader to understand why certain themes rather than others were chosen and why certain methods of treatment were indulged in rather than other, more obvious methods to the firm believer in Christ Jesus. The endeavor throughout is to set forth Christ Jesus as the Savior of the world. I have attempted to compare and contrast the Christ with those with whom He came into contact. The sermons thus presented are outlines rather than elaborations; earnest, practical discourses with a definite object in view rather than rhetorical, literary productions with an esthetic congregation in mind.

In reluctantly sending forth these messages may I say that they go with very tender and delightful memories of ten years filled so full with the diverse and exacting duties demanded of a city pastor of the twentieth century it was impossible to revise even cursorily the material in hand. The parish to which I have been called is hardly less exacting in its demands. May these imperfect sermons be read sympathetically and prayerfully and may they lead those who read them to a fervent desire to know Him Whom to know is life eternal.

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Sermons on the Gospels

I.

FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

ZECHARIAH 9:9.

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout O daughter of Jerusalem: behold thy king cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation; lowly and riding upon an ass, even upon a colt the foal of an ass."

We today enter upon a new church year and though its detailed celebration is not essential to our salvation, it is undoubtedly conducive to a clearer, more systematic and consequently more helpful knowledge of the plan whereby God saves men. This is accomplished by unfolding step by step the remarkable crises in the Life of lives, emphasizing first the significant dispensation of that Life and then pointing out the vital teachings which fell from the lips of Jesus. Ever bearing in mind the remarkable testimony of Peter, who, filled with the Holy Spirit, standing before the Sanhedrin said: "In none other is there salvation; for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved" we shall enter upon this new year with a more intense purpose of knowing Jesus, of knowing Him in His meekness and in His might, in His ability to heal and to save, in His preaching and in His teaching, but more especially in His willingness to suffer and to die, and in His glorious resurrection and exaltation to the right hand of His Father, and in His sending forth of the Comforter Who is to

lead not only the disciples, but us as well into the fruition of truth.

If there is salvation in none other it is equally certain that God has at all times communicated the knowledge of salvation to those who have been willing to listen to His voice. If it be true that there is salvation in none other, the Old Testament must bear its witness to this Messiah, for the Old Testament contains God's revelation of salvation to those who lived upon earth before the advent of the Savior into our flesh. It is exactly this truth among others which the Advent Sundays, directly preceding the celebration of the Nativity of our Lord, emphasize. The gospel lessons of this season are not to be read and pondered as interesting bits of historic literature, but rather as the summarization of the Old Testament vision of the Messiah and His reign. From this standpoint you can see how perfectly natural it is that we should have a repetition of the gospel lesson for the first Sunday in Advent on Palm Sunday. It is inserted at this point because it presents the most accurate picture of the Messiah, portraying as it does, the longing of Israel and the world for a Savior, setting forth the real need for Him, presenting by way of contrast the distorted view of the Savior and His coming entertained by Israel, thus permitting us to see wherein the picture as the populace beheld Him must be changed in order that it may accord with the vision of true prophecy. This vision in the prophecy of Zechariah is climactic. It is not the first faint ray of light indicating the Messiah's approach. Zechariah is one of the later prophets. The message before us is one of the later prophecies. Other prophets preceded Zechariah. Other prophecies preceded his. In fact, many scholars of today feel that the second part of the prophecy of Zechariah belongs to a later period than the first part, say to the second century before Christ. Should this conjecture happen to be correct, it would but

intensify what we are saying and indicate that we have before us one of the great final blasts of the herald's trumpet which announces the coming of the King hence bids the daughter of Zion, the daughter of Jerusalem to rejoice.

We desire to contrast the Messianic thought in the mind of the rabbi and of the prophet. Zechariah summarizes the view of Israel in ascribing to the Messiah the term King when he says: "Behold thy king cometh unto thee." It was perhaps natural for a people versed in the etymology of the term Messiah, knowing it to mean king, to look upon its temporal kings, one after the other, as the promised Messiah until the disillusionment came which proved the fallacy of their conjecture. Saul and David and Solomon are all of them, one after the other, spoken of as the anointed of the Lord. To this despised, down-trodden race of slaves and serfs, to them who arose gradually from their lowly estate to national consciousness and race loyalty, to them who had marched ever onward until at last the promised land was a reality, to Israel as it realized its physical limitations, to Israel, first as it rebelled against God and then sought Him again, there was a charm in the term *king*. Israel hoped against hope that it might obtain a strong, valiant, respected earthly king. This hope was kindled into an appreciable flame as Saul was anointed, then it grew ever more faint as this first king of Israel became subject to the evil spirit. Again the hope burst forth as David ascended the throne, but even David was human, even he was tempted, and when tempted he fell. The hope that his son Solomon would prove to be the true anointed one was of short duration. As one after the other of these kings came and went, as one after the other of the house of David succeeded to the stable throne of the smaller half of the divided kingdom, while there was little order in succession or duration in the reigns of the kings of the north,

the term assumed a new meaning as Israel began slowly to realize the meaning of the original objection of the Lord to the establishment of the monarchy and began to study the significance of the prophecies concerning the Messiah which assigned Him to the house of David, called Him a Son of David and established a seat for the holy city. The Messiah was no longer, to the mind of Israel simply an anointed king. He was to be not a king, but *the king* whose reign might be delayed for some time, but Who was to be the specific king in Whose government Israel would rejoice and prosper. The Messiah, the one Messiah, became the object of Israel's hope and consolation.

Unfortunately for Israel, it was willing and ready to accept the first picture of Isaiah and think of the Messiah as "'Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." It never rightly appreciated the second vision—"the suffering servant." In thinking of the Messiah, Israel did not think of Him as either priest or prophet, save as an ideal king would exercise the functions of both priest and prophet. It thought of Him as One Who would again restore the kingdom to Israel, a kingdom far surpassing other kingdoms, a king whose supreme rule would be so patent it could not help but be recognized. What a contrast there was between the king whom Israel was taught to expect by prophecy and the king its fancy decreed. The king decreed by fancy was to be a king as wise and as wealthy as Solomon, as devout as David, and as warlike as Saul. The king foretold by prophecy was to be "lowly, and riding upon an ass, even upon a colt, the foal of an ass."

The sense in which the term "lowly" is used does not mean that the Messiah would possess no dignity or inherent righteous pride or real worth. To be lowly as it is here used does not mean to be ignorant, or poor from necessity, or an outcast. To be lowly means the exercise

of the spirit of self-abnegation, self-sacrifice on the part of him who possesses every trait, yet is willing to forego his prerogatives in order that he may be the better able to serve others. Lowliness is the characteristic of true worth. If others have not been able to attain the heights you have scaled, you can do one of two things. You can look down from your superior position in a spirit of condescension or of contempt, of pity or of scorn, and ultimately you can ignore those in the valley below, or you can descend to assist and encourage those who are unable to reach the peak without assistance. How many an ascent has been made easy by painstaking, sympathetic guidance and encouragement, and, on the other hand, how many an ascent has been made impossible because of an absolute lack of sympathy and support. To educate a child a parent may be compelled to stop the process of self-ascent temporarily. To help a blind man over the street congested by traffic the busy pedestrian must permit his onward march to be impeded. To help men and women mentally, morally and spiritually may check the aspiration of genius, because such help demands lowliness and lowliness, in the eyes of a falsely aristocratic world, means retardation. Lowliness on the part of Christ was absolutely essential, a trait without which He could not have appeared among men. The Messiah must stoop if men are to be lifted up and drawn unto Him. The Messiah's problem is not the establishment of temporal government. It is not the invention of wonderful appliances in the interests of science, nor the discovery of unpeopled worlds. The Messiah's problem is the salvation of men and women who cannot be saved without this most remarkable demonstration of lowliness. They will not approach Him. He must approach them. They cannot think His thoughts. He must think their thoughts. They cannot work out their own salvation. He must work it out for them, and in doing so He must

not enslave but free them. They are servants of Satan. It is His problem to convert them into His brethren. He to Whom heaven and earth belong must accept as a loan an ass and the foal of an ass. He Whose ear is attuned to the melodies of heaven must listen to the discordant songs of Hosanna sung in a moment of tense excitement. He Whose residence is in the Jerusalem above must be content to enter the Jerusalem below. And yet He does all this and infinitely more, because He is the true Messiah. Had Israel studied prophecy instead of following a contaminated priesthood, which placed a ban on all prophecy not pleasing to it; had Israel thought as seriously of the priestly and prophetic function as it did of the regal function, it certainly could and would have discerned its king and recognized His advent.

Lowliness and peacefulness are placed in juxtaposition by the prophet. As you think of the Messiah you must think of Him as the Prince of Peace in His lowliness. The daily experience of Israel was not particularly conducive to peace. There were tribal animosities, insurrections, civil wars, encounters upon the field of battle with the leading nations of the world. To have slain tens of thousands was a far more acceptable boast than to have slain thousands. Thus it was perhaps natural that Israel, better versed in contemporary events than in prophecy, looked forward to the coming of a Messiah Who, as king, would acquit Himself a mighty victor in battle. The ancient oriental king desirous of leading his armies to victory was ever portrayed upon a charger as valiant as himself, whereas the ambassador of peace, engaged in more tranquil pursuits, was likewise portrayed upon the animal which, according to the prophet, was to be chosen by the true Messiah. We must not shrink from Christian truth because we everywhere meet with the paradox. He Who was to be the Prince of Peace Himself said: "Think not that I am come to send peace

on earth: I came not to send peace but a sword." This sword is never sent except as the precursor of peace. The sword that pierces the heart of Mary is but an incident in the liberation of countless other hearts. The Messiah is to come not as the prince of temporal peace, but as the Prince of the peace that passeth understanding.

The prophet further emphasizes the justice or righteousness of this Messiah as a fundamental characteristic. As one who is just He cannot possibly be the Messiah of but a small fraction of the population of the world. And yet Israel's conception, based upon the temporal kingship of the Messiah, was a national conception. It had no sufficient sympathy for those without, the dogs, as it called them. In this respect its criticism had in it more venom than that of the Greeks, who spoke of all other nations as barbarians. We cannot think of the Messiah as a national hero, a national Savior. No one versed in the writings of Holy Writ could ever have made such a mistake. It is this very trait of universality which raises Him infinitely above the gods of the nations and the leaders of men. Prophecy recognizes the need of such a universal Savior. You and I realize this need. Christ must be the Christ of and for the whole world.

In one other detail does the prophet call attention to Israel's inadequate conception of the Messiah, when he says of Him "and having salvation". Other prophets in times past pointed out Israel's blindness to the heinousness and deadlines of sin. Israel spoke of it in cutting, stinging rebuke. As a matter of fact, the rabbis ignored and discredited the teaching concerning original sin. Paul's trenchant reasoning in the Epistle to the Romans is directed against this error in common with others. They not only ignored original sin, they made it easy to atone for actual sin by means of an intricate system of sacrifice, a state of affairs very analogous to even present-day practices in a large part of the Christian Church.

To people thus trained in religious thought and belief there was, of course, little reason why the Messiah should bring salvation. The thought of the rabbis was materialistic. Their plane was that of sight and reason. Their world was the world of sense. Their Messiah must be a Messiah for such a world as this. Truly the fullness of time had come. With a darkness such as this hovering over the temple it is not surprising that the world was sighing for redemption, looking for a real Messiah and not an Israelitic king.

Dear friend, if you have not yet found the Messiah, surely you are honest in your desire to find Him; surely you are willing to seek Him where there is the greatest possibility of finding Him; surely you are willing to listen to the cumulative testimony of prophets and martyrs. Surely you are willing to place the testimonies of God side by side and compare them with your needs. You are not asked to accept the rabbinic picture of the Messiah. Its distortion has been pointed out. You are asked to consider the two-fold picture of this Messiah painted by prophecy. You know in your own heart that your life has often been a failure. You need a strong advisor and a sympathetic guide. You need some one who, as Prince of Peace, can calm your troubled breast. You need some one whose devotion to you is unquestioned. You need some one who, as you draw ever nearer to Him, will grow not smaller and smaller, as is the case with men, but bigger and bigger, until at last you are forced to recognize Him as your Lord and your God. A prayerful study of the Old Testament, with no other purpose than a desire to find the Christ, will, during this Advent season, properly fit you for the realization of your hope and prayer in the ability to crown your celebration of Christmastide with the voluntary confession: "we have found the Messiah".

II.

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

LUKE 21:31.

"When ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the Kingdom of God is nigh at hand."

The phrase "the last enemy to be conquered is death" was paraphrased by Strauss, the German scholar, to whom sacred things were no whit holier than secular word duels "the last enemy to be conquered is the conception of another world". In these words he confessed that the principles and the program of the battle he was fighting had not yet been won. He stood boldly for a tangible, visible world subject to sense perception. He deprecated the idea of an invisible world, an unseen realm, a spiritual world, an eternal kingdom of God, the more important hemisphere of life. In spite of his assertion as quoted above, and in spite of the more dogmatic "il n'y a pas de surnaturel" of Renan, Christian truth is still proclaimed and followers of Jesus Christ continue to believe the words of Christ and continue to proclaim their adherence to a cardinal article of our Christian faith by listening each year to the Master's announcement of His day and its preceding signs and by confessing their faith in the constant repetition of the words "from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead."

We simply cannot disassociate the temporal and the eternal and remain true to Christ. He has spoken too often and too pointedly of His Father's home as our home, and of that day as His day and our day. The Advent season would teach us a second lesson, ever to associate the two realms of which we have spoken and

to associate them in such a way that we shall appreciate the significance of both. If we would be true to Christ and His teachings, we must subject things tangible and seen to things unseen and eternal. This is an important message for an age which measures everything according to its conformity to the second commandment and is forgetful of the meaning of the first. The interlinking of these commandments even on that day is clearly demonstrated, but cause and effect must not be interchanged.

In the chapter from which our gospel lesson is taken there is a distinction between things temporal and eternal, things tangible and unseen. In the first part of the chapter we are told that Jesus, wending His way along the Mount of Olives, tarries sufficiently near the Holy City to command a view of its imposing temple. The marble blocks stand out in bold relief, a picture of massive grandeur. The disciples naturally call attention to stones which are so aptly emblematic of stability. They can surely not be mistaken in such an evident phenomenon. The picture is real. It forms part of the visible world, a world that may be seen and touched and appropriated by sense. Concerning this visible temple, Jesus says to the enthusiastic disciples: "As for these things which ye behold, the days will come in the which there shall not be left one stone upon the other that shall not be thrown down." The prophecy concerning the city of Jerusalem is specific and imposing. The visible city of God is to be compassed with armies in a warfare in which nation shall rise against nation. It shall be trodden down of the gentiles until the time of the gentiles be fulfilled. To this point we have been moving in a tangible, visible world. In the paragraph that follows we are shown a world that is just as real, just as concrete, though unseen; and here again, in this very gospel lesson, there is a clear

line of cleavage between the seen and the unseen in their Advent setting.

Nowhere are the two worlds more clearly distinguished or more forcibly conjoined. The whole Advent thought moves in this two-fold realm, constantly reiterating the consciousness of sin and limitation, yet through it all expressing the firm belief that redemption draweth nigh. Earth and heaven, the seen and the unseen, these are important Advent units. These are the subjects upon which Jesus would have His disciples reflect as they are about to go forth as sheep without a shepherd, and these are the objects upon which they are to fasten thought in token of His coming again to judge both the quick and the dead. In the important discourse here recorded concerning His second Advent He moves from the seen to the unseen, that which is seen gradually fading from sight and that which to this point has been unseen, gradually taking its place upon the screen, now visible to creatures erstwhile groaning and travailing in pain while waiting for a long-deferred hope and vision. We, too, shall adopt this orderly procedure. We, too, shall throw upon the screen the tangible things of the world as seen in the relation which they sustain to the coming of our blessed Lord and then as our horizon grows more luminous, exchanging these for the vision of the Son of Man in His glory and majesty.

The disciples are men of sense perception. They look upon the temple and behold its glory. They endeavor to pierce the spiritual realm and know something of the coming of the Son of Man and are completely dazed. Asking for a tangible sign whereby they may know when to expect the dawning of that day which marks the beginning of a fuller life, they are commanded to study the sun and moon and stars, for in that day "there shall be signs in the sun and moon and stars". The children of this world and the children of God have, throughout

the ages, vied with each other and helped each other in the scientific study of the heavens as manifested to sense perception. Lessons of the greatest importance have ever been attached to this study of the unfulfilled but firmly believed prophecy concerning the passing of the earth on which we live by virtue of a derangement of the planetary system. But a short time ago there appeared in a scientific journal a reiterated warning sounded by an eminent astronomer, who, in studying the heavens, has observed deflections from established rules and orbits and calls attention to the probability of the destruction of the planet on which we live. The trained eye and the telescope unite in their confirmation by sense perception of the truth enunciated long ago for the benefit of a doubting Thomas whom the Savior of men would not lose: "and upon the earth there shall be distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring". Accept the former statement concerning the sun and moon and stars and you must accept the latter concerning the sea and its billows and the distress of nations. Light and water, factors of primary importance and power in the creative work, must grind and toil and produce unitedly or rage in their dissonance. The distress of nations is the natural resultant of discords in the natural world in which there exists or should exist a spiritual law.

These are some of the signs of the coming of the Son of Man which may be perceived by the senses, but this vision is one of destruction, dismay and despair. Is there no sign of His coming to be witnessed in the visible world which tends to exalt? "And he spake a parable; behold the fig tree, and all the trees; when they now shoot forth ye see and know of your own selves that the summer is now nigh at hand." The thought of Jesus here enunciated is beautifully interpreted by Luther: "God wrote the last day not only in books, but also in the trees, that as often as we see the trees shoot forth in spring,

we are to remember this parable and the day of the Lord. . . Our miserable life here on earth is like unto the abominable, unfruitful winter. Heaven, earth, sea, stars, air and all creatures are tired of the world's malice and long for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." Thus whether it be the fig tree or the maple, the blossom or the flower, nature would remind us of that day of the Lord when all things shall be made new.

There is a relationship between the unseen and the senses as there is a co-ordination of the seen and the senses. The transformation is not complete. The advance is not radical, but nevertheless there is a new picture before us. As we listen to the harmony of melody and words in the beautiful aria: "O Thou that tellest good tidings to Zion," the effect produced upon us is not that of a secular strain or of a tangible environment. We are transported by the medium of song to the realm of the unseen, and our sense of hearing becomes the instrument whereby we apprehend somewhat of the glories of the invisible world. There is a connection between the unseen and the senses in the verse "verily I say unto you this generation shall not pass away before all things are fulfilled". Did the generation to whom these words were addressed not pass away before all things were fulfilled? No, for the reference is here to redemption and the Kingdom of God stood for redemption. The Kingdom of God was fulfilled in the death of Christ upon the cross, and the redemption thus wrought for believers. The unseen realm, the Kingdom of God, thus became subject, as it were, to sense, and even today as we meditate upon the second coming of Christ, the unseen may be discerned in its relation to the past.

Once He came in blessing,
All our sins redressing,
Came in likeness lowly,
Son of God most holy;
Bore the cross to save us,
Hope and freedom gave us.

Still He comes within us,
Still His voice would win us
From the sins that hurt us;
Would to truth convert us
From our foolish errors,
Ere He comes in terrors.

The historic Christ and the eternal Christ, the seen and the unseen, the unseen brought near by the seen, the second Advent the necessary resultant of the first! Again the picture changes. In thinking carefully of the Advent message contained in our text, we cannot help but detect the co-ordination of the unseen and spiritual perception.

The standard to be employed by the children of this world has ever been the seen and the senses. This standard has been demanded by the wave of scientific pursuit sweeping over the continents. But wheresoever the supernatural element is tolerated in its highest manifestation the unseen and spiritual perception are found closely related. He is the most consummate artist who evolves his picture or his statue, his symphony or his poem in the realm of the spiritual ere he materializes thought, and he is the most advanced Christian who calls out in absolute faith, though he may never have read a biography of Jesus other than the gospels, which, as a matter of fact, do not claim to be biographies: "I know that my Redeemer liveth." This spiritual perception is to be rewarded as the time draws nigh for the appearance of the Lord, for just as those who are the children of sight and sense will be confounded because of a perception of

the phenomena of nature which are unmistakable, so they who have moved even here in an unseen realm are commanded because of these very same natural phenomena "to look up and lift up their heads" for their redemption draweth nigh. The looking up and lifting up of the head vindicates the exaltation which has never been questioned by spiritual discerners. This exaltation is the natural consequence of a redemption wrought by a living Redeemer and a just Judge. The unseen and spiritual perception, these two factors of essential Christianity, should be present in every earnest disciple of Christ during this Advent season in an intensive concentration upon the thought as to whether or not he is ready to stand before the Son of Man. May we not concentrate upon this thought for a moment? Do we individually long for that day? Do we long to stand before the Son of Man? If our lives have been dedicated to sight and sense only, no, then we cannot sufficiently long to stand before Him. As I realize my frequent fall, the many deflections from truth and justice, the ruined friendships, the lack of love and moral force, I must shrink from that day. Only as I enter upon a spiritual communion with my Lord and Master, only as I appropriate His redemption, only as I realize that my vision may properly penetrate behind the veil which has been rent, may I look up, lift up my head and rejoice that my redemption draweth nigh.

The contrast between the seen and the unseen is most clearly set forth in their consummation. They who have longingly and patiently awaited the coming of the Son of Man shall realize their expectations. "Then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory." Contrast the picture of the babe in the manger with that of the glorious reappearance of the Savior and you will revise your once-expressed opinion that it was easier for His age to believe in Him

than for our age to do so. What the shepherds saw was indeed a wonderful sight, but the vision will be far more glorious when the portals of the unseen shall at last be swung open. The seen and the unseen! Surfeiting and drunkenness and cares of this life, these are enumerated among the things to be seen ere He shall appear. True watchfulness and prayer, these are among the unseen things of today and tomorrow. Surfeiting and drunkenness and cares of this life blear the eyes so completely it is impossible to see the snare which has been laid for us. Watchfulness and prayer so thoroughly clarify the vision that things unseen by the natural eye are first apprehended, then comprehended:

> Till with the vision glorious
> Her longing eyes are blest,
> And the great church victorious
> Shall be the church at rest.

Do you wonder that so much stress has been laid upon the Hallelujah chorus? Do you wonder that people rise when it is sung? Do you wonder that the great climax of the most wonderful story ever told demands the confession by every tongue that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father? Do you marvel that all creation represented by sun and moon and stars, billows and seas, blossoms and trees, unites with man in this chorus? We return to our question: Are you individually ready for the coming of the Son of Man?

III.

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

MATTHEW 11, 3.

"Art thou he that cometh or look we for another?"

On the spur of a hill to the east of and overlooking the Dead Sea are the extensive ruins of Machaerus, a city fortified by Herod the Great, in which he erected a palace, later one of his famous residences. Machaerus fell to the heritage of Antipas, ever after to be associated with his name. To this palace the daughter of Aretas, king of the Nabateans, asked that she be sent when Antipas divorced her and drove her from his presence. In the confines of a palace which, to her, was no more than a prison, she tarried, hoping, ever hoping that she might be permitted to return to her husband or flee to the jurisdiction of her father. Machaerus was the site of a dungeon as well. Hard by the palace was a prison, and to this prison John the Baptist was condemned for championing the cause of the daughter of Aretas in telling Herod that it was not right for him to have his brother's wife.

The stories of the third and fourth Sundays in Advent do not center in the Baptist, but portray his relation to the Messiah. The active ministry of John is ended ere the story recorded in our gospel lesson begins. He has told the truth at court. He has interfered with the autonomy of a tyrant, he has opposed despotism, sensuality and falsehood. He has subjected himself to the wrath of the king and his new queen. He has brought imprisonment upon himself. Languishing in his prison, he hears of the appearance of the Christ, whose

fore-runner he has been. The honest, impetuous, zealous John, who has awakened so many in Israel from their sleep, who has feared neither king nor peasant, neither class nor mass, becomes impatient and perhaps a bit sceptical. Report tells him the Messiah has come. If this person whose fame is spreading be the Messiah, there is no doubt about it he has not yet accomplished all those things which the Baptist has foretold. Impatience and doubt prompted him to send his disciples to Jesus with the question: "Art thou he that shall come, or do we look for another?" In asking the question, the Baptist injects a note of doubt into the Advent season. Hitherto there has been no doubt. The primary thought has concerned itself with grace, unbounded grace. "We are saved by grace" is the assertion of the apostle whose personal turning to Jesus was by no means the resultant of his own volition and desire. He had seen the King. His King had come unto him and neither man nor woman, child nor adult, can adequately reflect upon the meaning of the Advent season who has not beheld the motto, "Behold, thy king cometh unto thee" written large over the very portal of the season, and having seen it has heeded its import as did the apostle on the way to Damascus. This very thought, however, of the abundance of grace accorded us by the King, Who for this purpose is willing to lay aside His royal robe and spotless crown and put on our soiled and tattered garments and the crown of thorns woven for Him by us out of the brambles of sin, is followed by its sequence: suppose I do not accept this proffered grace, suppose I do not choose to accept it, suppose I continue to live as I did when I did not yet know Jesus? Then, of course, there is nothing left but judgment, a judgment which, though it need not be feared by them that love Jesus and await His coming, irrevocably settles my status and alligns me either for or against Him for all time. Thus

the very thought of judgment, emphasized during this season, is a dogmatic thought, and involves either the acceptance or the rejection of grace. At this point there is injected into the thought of the season the element of doubt. Suppose He Who has come is not the promised Messiah? Suppose we are compelled to continue our quest for truth and the promised Messiah; suppose His coming has been indefinitely postponed; suppose they who are still anxiously waiting for His appearance are the true Israel? The question, as John puts it, is the question of an honest man.

No man ever took life more seriously than did John the Baptist. No man ever trifled less with moments, days, months and years. In every sense he was a man sent from God who came for a witness to bear witness of the light that all men through Him, that is through Christ, might believe. Any man who is filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb must realize the responsibility with which he is endowed and fill life brimful with honest endeavor. This is exactly what happened in the experience of John. Born the son of a priest, his would naturally have been a priest's life, with its outward honors and comparative ease, the accompaniments of the office in his age. But he breaks with tradition, as every great man or woman before or after him has done, goes out into the desert, leaves his home and a life of ease, and prepares for his mission in life. His withdrawal from the haunts of men implied his break with "the prevalent Pharisaic type of piety". It meant his disapproval of corruption. It meant that he had for all time cast his lot as a reformer, an honest reformer. It meant that he believed king's palaces to be no fit places for meditation on life's work. It meant that he believed the question of fine raiment and elaborate food to interfere with a true conception of life. It meant that he realized the importance of studying the

past and the future recorded in the Scriptures he knew in order to apply their teachings to his own age. John has a message for his age. The message, though variously formulated, returns to the one word, "repent," turn from the darkness which covers the earth to the light which has risen. John's message converts the wilderness into a populated district. It is unnecessary for him to return to the haunts of men, for men, whether high or low in the scale of life, are seeking him out. They realize, as a new truth to most of them, that change of heart and mind are essential ere the Kingdom of God shall be realized. John is, above all things, a searcher of hearts. It seems strange that a man of his type should attract anyone. He lays bare the sins of individual lives just as he lays bare the sins of the nation. He cannot do otherwise. It is the Holy Spirit's message to humanity in anticipation of the day of the Lord. The very people who are most cuttingly rebuked are they who form the major portion of his audience.

Does this not accord with our own experience? Are there not moments when we awaken from our sleep of contentment to a full realization of the course we have been pursuing and its tragic results? An honest man with a serious motive in life, that motive to understand and interpret the purpose of God in His attitude toward men and the consequent conduct of man in his relationship to God and man, there is no greater dynamic in all the world than this.

The honesty of John may neither be described as the preachment of social integrity to the exclusion of personal responsibility nor the emphasis upon individual sinfulness to the exclusion of its social significance. He meets his duty as it presents itself. He flays society because of its mock mass unrighteousness, but he is equally earnest as he stands before the individual who is a factor in society, whether he be a leading Pharisee or the king

of the nation. No man unimpressed with the seriousness of life and the reality of God's call to him to right conditions that are wrong could ever have assumed an initiative such as John assumed. However, the greatest vindication of John's absolute honesty is not to be found in his presence before the king, whose sphere it was to rule over him. The greatest vindication for and test of his honesty lies in the open question which he puts to Him Who is to rule his heart: "Art thou he that shall come, or do we look for another?" John knew full well, as you and I know, that some one must rule the heart, some one must be our Master; we must be some one's disciples. The other alternative is that others must be our disciples or that we consciously separate our lives and our interests from the world round about us. John had not given up his hope and faith even here in prison in the coming of a Messiah. The problem of religion was too real for that. The Scriptures were too vital for that. His life, dominated and impelled by the Holy Spirit, would and could brook no thought of ultimate disappointment in the coming of the Messiah. The only question that forced itself upon him as it has forced itself upon the minds of many of the house of Israel was "art thou he that shall come, or do we look for another"? Were there not many in his day and the day of the Messiah who believed as we have already seen that Messiah would come otherwise than He actually came? Were there not those whose conception of the Fatherhood of God through Abraham seemed to demand no Fatherhood of God through Jesus Christ? To them Abraham had actually taken the place of the Messiah, and Abraham's bosom had lost its typical significance and assumed a final meaning. They needed no other than Abraham. For many others Moses was the Messiah. They needed nothing more because they had Moses. They needed no prophets. They did not realize the import of the

prophetic word: "a prophet like unto me shall the Lord awaken from among your brethren". To them the lawgiver who had communed with Jehovah on the mount and received his commandments for the children of men was the real intercessor between God and man. Still others, mindful of the very last words of the Old Testament: "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of Jehovah come; and he shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers; lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" looked upon the prophet who had conquered the priests of Baal as the Messiah who was to appear. In the lesson for next week we shall see that there were those who believed John himself to be the Messiah. With this great confusion in the minds of the children of Israel, need we be surprised that the Baptist, languishing in prison, became a bit confused? In it all and through it all his eyes never turned to the past as did the eyes of many of his contemporaries. He knew the Christ was not manifest in Abraham or in Moses, nor in Elijah. He knew the Christ would come as Scripture predicted. His only concern was: "art thou the Christ"?

In leading foreign students in our universities, the devotees of heathen cults, to Christ it has grown to be the customary procedure to introduce them into the field of comparative religion, to point out to them the characteristics of religions which are familiar to them, in order that these characteristics and principles may be compared with the essentials of Christianity. The intention is to awaken in their hearts and minds a consciousness of the supremacy of Christ. This consciousness existed in the mind of John. He needed not that it be awakened. He needed a real demonstration of the power of Jesus in accordance with the high ideal which he had ever had before him. It is true, in this respect, he places

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himself beside Thomas. He must see and feel. He must be assured. But his faith is greater than that of Thomas, for, as we have seen, he has never wavered in his acknowledgment of the expected appearance of the Christ, the Savior of the world. Friends, the question is one you cannot evade. You must answer it and you must seek to answer it honestly. Is the Jesus Who came twenty centuries ago the Son of God, the Messiah, the Savior of the world, or is He not? That the world must have a Savior we know. Is Jesus, the lowly Nazarene, the Son of Mary, the Savior of the world? Is He your Savior? You have not answered that question by settling back comfortably in your pew and taking it for granted. You have not answered the question by evading it. More than that, you have not answered the question by surfeiting in the pleasures of this life and the criticisms of the age. The splendid, rugged honesty of John appears in the method which he adopts to convince himself concerning the claims of the Messiahship of Jesus. He has brooded over the question long enough. He cannot determine the problem by brooding. He does not decide to send his disciples or others than his disciples to observe the work and teachings of Jesus in a critical spirit without revealing their identity to the Master. His method is far more direct than that. The disciples are to go to Christ. They are to ask Him. He is to give Christ the benefit of the doubt. John has not convinced himself that Christ is not the Messiah. The burden of proof does not rest on the shoulders of Christ, but on those of John. It isn't so much the question of having Christ prove His claim as it is of having the Baptist confirm his weak faith. These facts are of very great importance in your determination of the question. Christianity must not be asked to establish its case. It can be asked to set forth a continued demonstration of power over the lives of men. If you would know Jesus, you must go directly to Him

and not to another. You cannot go to Him as did the disciples of John and witness His works and listen to His preaching as He walks among men; but you can do more than the disciples of John were able to do. You can seek Him in His Word. The entire field of vision open to John lies open before you. The entire Old Testament, with its hopes and its promises, its expectations and its failures, its reverses and its victories, its darkness and its dawning, its search after truth by some and its utter blindness on the part of others, this was the Bible of John and his disciples as it is part of our Bible. We say it is only part of our Bible. John the Baptist did not have before him the wonderful testimony of Matthew and Mark and Luke. Neither he nor his disciples realized at that time the enormous progress to be made in the apprehension of Christian truth by one who was numbered among that band and was later to lean upon the bosom of Jesus and still later to give to the world its most precious record of that life. They could not then tell that a Hebrew of the Hebrews, resident in Tarsus, would come forward at the beck of the Master and overthrow many of their preconceived ideas of religion and the Messiah. They did not realize the significance for Christianity in the step which Andrew, the erstwhile disciple of Jesus, took when he went "and first found his own brother, Simon, saying unto him, we have found the Messiah". They did not know the Messiah as you and I can know Him, even though they saw Him with their physical eyes.

The question is often asked: Why are some of the cults of today so successful in the dissemination of their heretical teachings and true Christianity often so weak? The answer is simple enough; because the devotees of these cults are made to study Scriptures and the Christians of today do not study them. The question "art thou He that shall come, or do we look for another"? can

be answered only as we ask Christ, only as we seek to find Him in His Word, only as we pray the Holy Spirit to unlock the mysteries of the Book which testifies of Him.

IV.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

JOHN 1:19.

"This is the witness of John, when the Jews sent unto him from Jerusalem priests and levites to ask him, Who art thou?"

Bearing witness may be termed the great business of life. It is a fundamental principle involving both law and gospel, things temporal and things eternal. That the law cannot be administered without witnesses was early recognized, as is clearly attested in the Deuteronomic code. "At the mouth of two witnesses or three witnesses shall he that is to die be put to death; at the mouth of one witness shall he not be put to death." And the importance of witness bearing is still further emphasized by insisting that witnesses shall throw the first stone upon the culprit adjudged guilty of death. According to this same law, a false witness was to undergo the exact punishment which would have been meted out to the accused had it been true. Prophecy also recognizes the importance of this function and constitutes Jehovah at one and the same time the judge, prosecutor and witness in dealing with His people. He has witnessed the sin of man. Therefore He bears testimony, accuses and judges.

Even in Jesus' day the importance of having witnesses is acknowledged by the elders of the Jews who introduce false witnesses against Jesus. Would our testimony have differed materially from that of the leaders of His day? We are concerned on this fourth Sunday in Advent with our own personal testimony concerning ourselves and the relationship we sustain to the Christ. The entire incident recorded in the gospel lesson revolves about the question

"who art thou"? The answer will indicate the relationship we sustain to both Christ and the world. It will help us properly to celebrate Christmas Day or it will hinder us from a fulsome participation in its blessings.

"Who art thou?" was primarily the question of the Jews who sent representatives out into the wilderness across the Jordan river to seek out this wierd prophet whose incisive messages had reached the ears of the Sanhedrin assembled at Jerusalem. It was, as we know, a specific function of the Sanhedrin to guard against false prophets. Time and again such false prophets had arisen and led many astray. Hence it was natural for this conservative body on hearing the reports of the mighty preaching and teaching of John to send representative men out to obtain information concerning him and his work at first hand. It is not difficult to picture these spies as they mingle with the great throngs and listen to the words of the Baptist. It is not difficult to conjecture the inspiration which prompted the preacher to recognize their motive in coming to his preaching and their need of a new viewpoint, hence such words as these are addressed directly to them: "even now the axe lieth at the root of the trees: every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire". The message of the preacher, his appearance, his great following, the striking realism of it all is too much for these representative priests and Levites. They are bewildered, and in their bewilderment they recognize the need of a personal interview with John. On approaching him, they find him ready to answer their question. So great has been the impression created upon their minds by what they have seen and heard they begin their questioning by endeavoring to discover whether he believes himself to be the Christ or not. John is, as always, absolutely honest. "And he confessed and denied not, and he confessed, I am not the Christ." Throughout many cen-

turies the world had been preparing for the coming of the Messiah. He could not come ere the fulness of time had dawned, but many signs in Israel's history pointed to the fact that Christ was at last standing before the door. He was to be the great climax in the history of Israel. The one specific function of the law and the prophets was to point the way to Him. This had been done. The synagogue was ready for the Messiah. As it afterward proved it was not ready for a Messiah born in a manger, the friend of sinners and publicans, but it did expect a Messiah. And it was ready to investigate the claims of any false prophets who might present themselves. There was nothing unreasonable in the question they asked him when these things are borne in mind. John did not hesitate for a moment. He was an ideal forerunner of Christ because of his never-failing recognition of the relationship which he sustained toward Christ. "In the midst of you standeth one whom ye know not, even He that cometh after me, the latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to unloose." In the eyes of many of the populace there could have been little to choose, as they thought, between the forerunner and the Messiah, the disciple and the Master. The disciple alone recognized the great chasm between the earth-born and the heaven-born kinsmen. Consequently, on the very day after this interview, as Jesus approaches the Baptist, the Baptist points to him as he says: "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world." The one thought uppermost in the mind of the disciple concerning the Messiah is his separateness from mankind and His Mission for mankind. To Isaiah the Holy One meant the separated one. It means that and a little more to John. For Isaiah the Separated One is the Judge. John thinks of Him as the Savior of the world. John cannot honestly claim to be the Christ. He desires no such distinction.

Humanity's ideal is to be found in no human leader. As the question is asked of those who are deemed great among men "who art thou" with at least some intention on the part of those who question to determine the possibility of actualizing an ideal there comes in each case either from the lips of the person so addressed or as the resultant of an investigation, the by no means uncertain reply "not the Christ". It seems very strange, does it not, that in our times the test cannot be the direct question in every instance, that men are at times unwilling to make the confession of John, that witnesses must be arrayed against them to disprove their erroneous estimate of themselves. Sin is not the heinous thing it once was. There are so many mitigating circumstances, so many reasons why transgressions occur, which seem to be perfectly natural, so many disturbances for which no one is responsible, so much reasoning about the divinity in our nature, we have quite forgotten our estrangement from God, quite forgotten that He looms larger than man, quite forgotten the relationship we sustain to Him, quite forgotten that our transgressions have created a chasm which only His love can bridge. We cannot live without an ideal, and our ideal is worth but little if it can either never be realized or if in being realized it separates us from Christ. John's ideal, John's passion, was Christ and Christ was to him the Lamb of God, the Savior of the world. Art thou the Christ, dear friend, for surely there must be a Messiah, a Christ in your life? Surely the hope of Israel is not a delusion. You must confess, and if you will not, others will do it for you "I am not the Christ".

The priests and Levites have arrived at a partial conclusion in their investigation of this strange personage—John. They have heard from his own lips that he does not profess to be the Christ. Their difficulty has, however, not been solved. They have swept aside a con-

jecture. They must obtain a positive answer. "And they asked him, what then? Art thou Elijah?" It was most natural that they should first have sought to identify John with the Messiah. It was quite logical that in their continued examination they should endeavor to ascertain whether or not he was Elijah. The very last words of the Old Testament associate the coming of the great day of the Lord with the appearance of Elijah. "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of Jehovah come. And he shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." This was part of the Scripture which the priests and Levites read continually and endeavored to interpret. And there was no doubt about it, the parallelism between Elijah and John was striking. Both came to proclaim judgment. Both came from the wilderness. Both were austere in manner and ascetic in life. In their preaching and in their baptism there was much similarity. Jesus Himself indicates that the prophecy of Malachi has found its fulfilment in John the Baptist, for as he was coming down from the mountain with His disciples after the Transfiguration and enjoined them to tell the vision to no man, they in turn asked: "Why then, say the scribes, that Elijah must first come?" And Jesus answered them: "I say unto you that Elijah is come already, and they knew him not, but did unto him whatsoever they would." The evangelist adds: "Then understood the disciples that he spake unto them of John the Baptist." Why then does John deny that he is Elijah re-incarnate? Because the Jews had woven round about the prophetic word a mass of tradition; forgetting the original setting and meaning of the Word of God, they awaited the coming of a re-incarnate prophet, disguised to suit their fancy and equipped to do their work. In this sense he was not Elijah.

Who art thou, dear friend, a re-incarnate man of God, cast in a certain mould, with no power of initiative, no distinct message, no peculiar environment? Are you willing to be some one other than the self God would have you be? As the first question "art thou the Christ"? has taken you by storm and has convinced you of your own humility and unworthiness, has convicted you of your sinfulness, the second, "art thou Elijah"? has carried you to the mount and has shown you the Lord in the moment of His transfiguration, not as Elijah saw Him, but as you and only you have seen Him, recognizing your specific duty and your direct opportunity. Your duty and your opportunity very much resemble the duty and the opportunity of every other Christian, but there is added the individual duty, the individual opportunity which belongs to no one other than you.

Baffled a second time in their conjectures, the inquirers return to their task of ascertaining the identity of this preacher. "Art thou the Prophet?" they ask him. Moses had been likened unto a prophet who shall be raised up from among his brethren. John has already denied that he is the Christ. He has denied that he is Elijah. The third question and answer follow in logical sequence. John is not a re-incarnate Moses, nor a re-incarnate Jeremiah, as some supposed. John does not claim the distinction of occupying the chief seat at the table of his Lord, for he knows that self-exaltation brings abasement and that humiliation is the highest type of Christian virtue.

The inquirers return once more to the question "who art thou"? They acknowledge the insufficiency of their conjectures by permitting the Baptist to exercise his own discretion in the answer he is to render. He is to respond as he deems best and he does so by applying to himself the prophetic word of Isaiah: "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness; make straight the way of the

Lord, as said Isaiah the prophet." The real speaker is the Lord. Isaiah is the chronicler and John the voice. Carrying Israel back in its experiences to the dark days of its history spent in journeying to the promised land, this voice of the Lord would remind Israel of the similitude of the promised occasion. Again Israel was spiritually wandering, spiritually at sea, spiritually seeking the path to Canaan and the way was opening before it. Israel's new Canaan was not to be a temporal habitation, but an eternal presence of the Lord. Israel's sin was being washed away by John as he brought about the repentance of at least some of those who heard him, but after all the baptism of John was a symbol, not to be compared with the regeneration wrought by Christ. John's answer to the question "who art thou"? is direct and specific. He is the messenger of Christ, the voice of the Lord, at one with his Master and his God. He is not Christ. He is not Elijah. He is not that prophet. He is the path-breaker of the Messiah for many men and women who otherwise would not have been ready to receive their Lord. And that is just what you are to be during this Advent season, a path-finder for those who have not found the path, a constructionist for those who have lost their grip on the unseen world, a unit in the necessary preparation for the coming of the Kingdom of God. Who art thou? perhaps the humblest of the children of God, yet able, by the grace of God, to point the way to those who do not know it to Bethlehem.

V.

CHRISTMAS DAY.

LUKE 2: 1, 11.

"Now it came to pass in those days, there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be enrolled.

"There is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

We have assembled this morning to attest our appreciation of the initial stages of the greatest fact in the history of the world, a deed so luminous, it at once becomes the logical line of cleavage between all that has preceded and all that follows. The birth of a babe at Bethlehem at a season of enrollment ordered by Caesar Augustus would not in itself have been an object worthy of the laudation accorded to the nativity, even if that child had, in growing to mature manhood, developed traits of genuine human greatness. In celebrating the birthdays of men of great renown, leaders of their age and of the ages, we do not ordinarily commemorate the environment in which they were born, but rather the heights to which they attained. We admire the steadfast purpose, the undaunted zeal, which leads from the rude frontier hut to the place of unsurpassed supremacy in the affections of a people. *The birth of the babe of Bethlehem is unique in the annals of the world, not as the coming into this world of a babe destined to attain human greatness, but as the voluntary surrender by God of prerogatives belonging to Him as God in order that He might in turn assume the divine prerogative of rescuing humanity from sin and the grave.*

The narrator of the gospel history has not by chance

included in this day's lesson the name of the reigning monarch of the then-known world. He has not by chance introduced that name at the very beginning of the story, long before the introduction of the name of the babe born in an insignificant village in an outlying district of the great Roman empire, over which Caesar Augustus ruled. Though to some it may appear improper at first sight to associate any other name with the name of Jesus on this day, a more earnest study will convince us of the eminent propriety of following the evangelist's leading in our endeavor to compare and to contrast Caesar Augustus and Jesus the Christ, thereby realizing the supreme significance of the birth of Jesus at the time and under the circumstances recorded.

In his time and among his countrymen the Roman emperor, designated as Caesar Augustus in the gospel narrative, was perhaps better known as Caius Octavius, a name borne by his father as well. It may be interesting to follow the leadings of history and to be informed anew that he was the grand-nephew of Julius Caesar. It may be interesting to recall that he was the man who occupied the throne when the fullness of time, spoken of by the prophets, had come, reigning as he did until the year 14 of the Christian era, though born in the year 63 of the pre-Christian era. Named as Caesar's heir in the last will of the dictator, he proceeded to Rome after the assassination of his illustrious ancestor. First one of a triumvirate, later, the sole ruler of Rome, Octavius was proclaimed emperor of the country which ceased to be a republic and began its existence as an empire. Soon after the title Augustus was accorded the new Caesar and the process was begun by him whereby he gradually and craftily assumed an arbitrary control of the world-empire of his day. We cannot here trace the steps he took to subordinate first the Senate and then the ever-growing military power of Rome. As by magic he

rebuilt or built anew temples of the gods and prominent among them all, the temple of Julius Caesar in the forum itself. He ordered the construction of great military highways, connecting every part of his vast empire, all of these highways leading from or to Rome. He permitted divine honors to be paid to the emperor of Rome as the embodiment of the Roman state. He established a two-fold office of priests, the provincial priests and the city priests, the former, under his direct supervision, taking precedence and carrying out his wishes. Rome had grown mightily. Within the confines of the city of Rome and within the borders of the empire Judaism existed, but only as a despised, rebellious outcast race of perverts, seditiously inclined, in open antagonism to the military and spiritual power of the empire. The real god of Rome was the Roman emperor, Caesar Augustus, whose conspiracies had established his throne, whose zeal was primarily directed to the perpetuation of his own name and that of his family, who stepped upon the dead bodies of fallen foes and had little or no time for the reeking conditions of immorality in his empire or even in his home until it was entirely too late to rectify them. In all the tabulation of the gods of the nations of all ages there is no more flagrant illustration of their nothingness than that afforded by the god of Rome as he came to be designated and known in the provinces. There was no dearth of outward pomp and magnificence. Rome was a mighty empire. The Caesar of Rome was a mighty but soulless man, at once emperor and slave.

Have you ever arrayed side by side the contemporaries, the emperor of Rome and the King of Kings? Thus and thus alone you will be able to understand the significance of this day and season. A comparison such as this completely disproves the validity of human standards in the solution of the problems of life and introduces a new standard for our consideration. Caesar Augustus

represents human power at its height. A mighty general, he leads his armies, after the cessation of foreign hostilities into the camps of his own countrymen, engaged in civil strife, subdues one after the other of his enemies, enters the very camp of his rival, by his pleadings persuades his erstwhile enemies to be his followers and establishes a temporal reign of vast power and extent. On the other hand, Jesus Christ represents human helplessness at its height. The leader of a little band of fishermen and untutored Galileans, he is driven from his own hamlet by a hostile group of his fellow citizens, he is despised and rejected of men in a rural province, forsaken by his own disciples, his own claims of royalty mocked by the putting upon his head a crown of thorns and in his hand a reed, the same claims still further caricatured by the inscription placed upon the cross: "Jesus of Nazareth (not of Rome), the King of the Jews" (not of the Romans). Surely his words found their fulfilment: "My Kingdom is not of this world." Have you ever thought of Caesar Augustus and Jesus Christ as the exponents of diametrically opposed programs for their constituency? We cannot stop to speak of the line of cleavage in their home relationships, of the disparity between Rome and Bethlehem or Nazareth, nor of the many things that tended to separate these two kings. The real lesson for this day lies in the presentation of the diametrically opposed programs of Caesar and Jesus.

Augustus realized that Rome must have a ruler. His view was that later stated academically by the Philosopher Hobbes in asserting that man's natural tendencies are "self-regarding". Caesar would bring men to his feet. He would wage warfare until he had accomplished his purpose. He did accomplish that purpose temporarily. The program of Caesar Augustus was a program of dictatorship, his conscience was the law of Rome, his

purpose the exaltation of self, which, of course, included the exaltation of Rome as a necessary factor. Perhaps we would not be too harsh in our judgment of Augustus if we fully realized that he but expressed the legal program and attitude of Rome, which, as was later shown in the trial of Jesus, was not altogether unlike the legalistic program and life of Israel.

As over against a purpose such as this, the purpose indicated in Christ's coming into the world and announced by the angel to the shepherds upon the fields of Bethlehem is simply unique and marks an era in the history of the world, in its thought and in its life. Of course, you remember the message: "Be not afraid; for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people: for there is born unto you this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord. And this is a sign unto you: ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger." The chorus of the accompanying host is the essential consummation of the message: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased." Thus the message is not by heralds who have been specially chosen, specially commissioned, specially appareled, specially drilled, to proclaim the assumption of the crown by a ruler of the world, but it is the message of God to the children of men, announced by those who appreciate and fully understand the significance of the errand upon which they have been sent. Caesar Augustus, the slayer of men; Jesus Christ, the Savior of men! For ages and ages in the economy of the world individuality had been emphasized by a process of self-regarding. Even the kings and prophets of Israel were not free from guilt in this respect. Moses the lawgiver placed himself, his own personality, his own interests, his own misgivings so prominently in the path of God, he temporarily at times obstructed God's plan for

men and their salvation. For the first time in the economy of the world individuality was to achieve power and bestow it upon others by self-renunciation, self-sacrifice. "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior of the world," this was a motto of the early Christians. The fact expressed by the words "Savior of the world" was unique in its realization. As an idea it had been thought of before, but as a fact it had never been an object of thought. Now in a single moment of time the angelic message conveyed to the shepherds as trustees of the ages and the peoples changes the idealism of prophets, the intimations of heathen philosophers, the incoherent desires of the nations into a reality. The oftentimes meaningless sacrifices of Israel, meaningless to the prophets, wrongly significant to the people, become surcharged with meaning, as the embodiment of an idea never realized until realized in the manger at Bethlehem. The greatest principle in all the world was suddenly actualized as the passion history of Jesus began at Bethlehem. It is not because others have chanted a refrain, but "we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Savior of the world".

Friends, let us not shrink from the truth! Let us be perfectly frank and honest in admitting with all our hearts that the Incarnation was rendered necessary, not because Caesar Augustus was a monster of iniquity beside whom all other men, all other rulers sink into insignificance, but because he was simply a representative, and a worthy representative of his time, as he would undoubtedly have been looked upon as a worthy representative of our time if it were not for the Incarnation. Even today the estimate of Caesar Augustus is apt to be very conservative among those who endeavor to eliminate Christ and His influence from their lives. Picture your life and mine without Christ and you have a portrait of Caesar Augustus. Perhaps the sins which loom largest

in him are subordinate to other sins in others who live without Christ, but the effect is the same, because all those who live without Christ cannot help but be monsters of iniquity.

There are stages in human conduct and life which stand for attitudes toward religion. In the first stage, no apologies are needed for the transgression of law, for where law is divorced from religion it is not intended for those who are in authority and exercises no sway over those who do not admit its validity, as is the case with those who deem themselves enlightened. The first stage is that of the man and woman who beckon to their neighbors and say: Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. This was the stage and the attitude of Caesar Augustus, as it is the plane of existence of those who, in their personal life, repudiate religion, even though they may build temples and sacrifice to the gods as a harmless custom and one to be encouraged for the sake of the masses.

In the second stage, apologies are needed, for there is a recognition of the validity and the hardness of the law. Life is lived in accordance with certain standards because the world holds these standards to be essential to the welfare of society. Man conforms to them not because he is convinced of the rightness of his action per se, but because he would be ashamed of being caught in doing what is considered wrong. To him God is law, and he lives a life of serfdom to the law while cherishing anarchic thoughts within his heart. Let us go a step further, and admit that there may be men and women who, without positive religious convictions, may look up to, prize and reverence law, yet *are they* not slaves, serving man-made, hence imperfect, ordinances?

These are the pictures of man without Christ. You must paint him either as a slave or an anarchist, a slave to law, a slave to sin, a slave to society, a slave to him-

self, or an anarchist because, with Caesar Augustus, he is ready to reign at any price, treading men under foot and crushing out their lives for the good of self or the state.

There is a third stage of human life and conduct which, admitting the fallacy and the sin in the two stages pictured, the absolute injustice on the one hand of trampling the law under foot, and, on the other hand, the sin of making the law to be one's god, rests its claims solely upon the gospel of the love of God, a love which manifests itself most clearly in the sending forth of Jesus Christ to be the Redeemer of the world. If there need be a choice today, and there must be, between Caesar Augustus, not as a power ordained of God, but as a god, and Jesus Christ, the Son of God, it will not be difficult for you to decide the question.

We are interested in the little pilgrimage from Nazareth to Bethlehem many, many years ago, in the sojourn without the inn, in the birth of the babe of Bethlehem, in the shepherds and the angelic message, because these incidents are parts of the most wonderful story ever told, parts of the greatest fact in the history of the world, parts of the deed of God that shall go ringing down through the ages as fathers and sons, mothers and daughters recognizing the personal equation in it all shall catch up and continue to sound forth the refrain: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased."

VI.

SECOND CHRISTMAS DAY.

LUKE 2: 17-20.

"And when they saw it, they made known concerning the saying which was spoken to them concerning this child. And all that heard it wondered at the things which were spoken unto them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these sayings, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen even as it was spoken unto them."

The gospel lesson for Christmas Day is incomplete without the lesson for the second Christmas Day. The gospel lesson for Christmas Day contains the great announcement of the manifestation of God's love for mankind. The lesson for this day is its sequel. Yesterday we saw the shepherds upon the field listening to the angel's story while watching their flocks. Today we see those same shepherds deciding to leave their flocks for a little while in order that they might verify the angel's announcement and accept his invitation. Today's gospel speaks to us of the successive steps in our Christian life as it reminds us of the manner in which the Christ Child is revealed unto and within us, for after all, the method pursued in the instance of the shepherds is that still pursued in your life and in mine.

The Christ was revealed to the shepherds first of all through hearing. In this respect their faith was engendered in the manner indicated as the normal method of procedure by Paul in his epistle to the Romans. In the seventeenth verse of the tenth chapter of that letter Paul says: "So belief cometh of hearing and hearing by the

word of Christ." It was not only the word of the Father transmitted through the medium of angels to which the shepherds listened out there upon the field, they were listening as well to the word of the eternal Christ Who had surrendered certain prerogatives voluntarily that He might be born of a virgin. Had the shepherds been unwilling or unprepared to listen when the glory of the Lord, in which the angel appeared, shone round about them, they would have sacrificed the prestige which has been theirs from that day to this. Was it not because they were more ready to hear, because they were more receptive than were the leaders of the people, the Pharisees and Scribes, the rich and the learned, the priests and the high-priest, that the angel appeared to them rather than to the standard bearers of Israelitic religion? They whose ears had become acute in the stillness of a night that might forebode either life or death for the flocks committed to their care were more ready to receive the angel's message than were they whose nightly wranglings about matters concerning the law had forced them to stop their own ears for which they had less use than for their tongues. The shepherds had found it not only desirable, but very necessary to develop their faculties for intensive use. Their solitary occupation demanded the cultivation of the sense of hearing and then the cultivation of their sense of sight. The former of these faculties needed to be exercised during the watches of the night, the latter during the watches of the day. The environment of these shepherds fitted them for their life work, but this environment would not in itself have fitted them for their work if they had not studied their environment. How many Christians of today are there who never advance very far in their Christianity because neither eyes nor ears have been trained, and, of course, hearts and minds are, to a certain extent at least, dependent upon eyes and ears. There is something very fascin-

ating about the stories of the American Indians, whose trained ears and eyes have made it possible for them to scent danger where their white companions have neither seen nor heard anything. If it is necessary to cultivate the faculties which God has given us that we may be ready to meet the problems of our every-day temporal life, how much more necessary is it to practice hearing in our spiritual life ere we shall essay to be teachers. How necessary it is also to distinguish between the voice of the good shepherd and the voice of the hireling or the robber. The shepherds on Bethlehem's field recognized the voice of the angel as the voice of the good shepherd and followed that voice to its source. The voice to which they were permitted to listen was not a voice of alarm but of encouragement, not a danger signal, but a call of relief and helpfulness. The news of the coming of the Christ Child very naturally produced astonishment. The shepherds on hearing the news were astonished. "And all that heard it wondered at the things which were spoken unto them by the shepherds." Wherever the news traveled it was received in the same way.

The second step in the revelation of the Christ Child must be a sense of astonishment. Otherwise we could not legitimately look upon it as news of a vital sort. Perhaps the nearest appproach to the intensity of the astonishment produced by the coming of the Christ Child upon the minds of the shepherds in our own day was the sense of utter astonishment when in the early days of August, 1914, we read of events which were happening which somehow left us staggering as we realized that the very foundations of the world were being shaken. The inadequacy of the religious life of most of us is due to the fact that the news of the coming of Jesus Christ into this world has gripped us less effectively than the announcement of the beginning of

the world war. The news of the coming of Jesus Christ is constructive, that of the downfall of nations is destructive. We are better fitted to receive and communicate information concerning the world's destructive agencies than we are to receive and communicate the plans of God for man's salvation. The astonishment of all that heard the news in Jesus' day need not trouble us nearly as much as the indifference with which the news is received in our own day. The foundations of the world must be shaken if the world is to be rebuilt. The foundations of individual life need to be shaken if the individual soul is to be aroused from its torpor and made fully awake and alive to the presence of the Christ in our world. The coming of Jesus Christ into the world produced astonishment. The teaching of the twelve-year-old boy and of the mature man produced astonishment. The miracles of the Christ produced astonishment. The answers of Jesus produced astonishment. The death of Jesus produced astonishment. The resurrection of Jesus produced astonishment. The appearance of the risen Christ produced astonishment. The ascension of Christ produced astonishment. Real Christians of today must be astonished that these facts no longer produce astonishment.

We are told that "Mary kept all these sayings, pondering them in her heart". This constitutes the third step in the revelation of the Christ Child within our lives. If we would know anything about the Christ we must open our ears to the gospel proclamation of the angels as did the shepherds. If we have opened our ears to this message and have caught its significance we must have been stunned just a bit. Our astonishment is not, however, to be the last step in our Christian development. Astonishment must yield to meditation. Why are we told all these things? Is there no purpose in the proclamation? Is there no relationship between the

various parts of this gospel proclamation? Is there no point of contact between the birth of Christ and His passion and death? Is there no relationship between His death and His resurrection? Is the resurrection of Christ not closely associated with His ascension? Is His ascension not closely associated with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit? You see, do you not, why it is necessary for Simeon to chill a mother's optimism a bit by announcing to her: "Behold, this child is set for the falling and rising of many in Israel; and for a sign which is spoken against: yea and a sword shall pierce through thine own soul; that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed." Mary needed to place side by side the various messages concerning Jesus for the establishment of a true as over against a false faith in her own heart. She was perhaps the least ostentatious, but the most hopeful of those who had received the message. The sort of meditation in which we can only engage after having heard the entire angelic sermon, the sort of meditation in which we can engage only after having listened to the Christ Himself, the sort of meditation that cannot be finished in a noon-day service or a half hour at home, the sort of meditation that requires concentration and much time, the pondering of these things for years as Mary did, this is the sort of meditation that can alone bring us nearer the goal of an adequate revelation of the Christ Child. Luther said that prayer, meditation and temptation go to the making of a theologian. These things go into the making of the child of God as well.

The fourth step in the revelation of the Christ Child within us is the voluntary, gladsome proclamation to others of the news which we ourselves have received. The story tells us that "when they saw it, they made known concerning the saying which was spoken to them about this child". They had heard and they had seen. They, the shepherds, were to be the first pastors and

preachers of Christ from among men. They were no more tutored in speech than were the disciples when they first became disciples of Christ. They had no training in the accompaniments of oratory. They had a message. That was all. That was all that was necessary. Paul Revere was the sort of preacher they were. He had a message and it was necessary to communicate his message as rapidly as possible to the greatest number of persons. Paul Revere's message as his steed went galloping down the village street was conveyed with somewhat of the intensity with which the shepherds made known concerning the things spoken to them about this child. Paul Revere simply could not do otherwise than he did and, of course, the shepherds could not have done otherwise than they did. If the passion to tell your friends something about your own hopes and something about your own faith has never taken hold of you there has been no adequate revelation of the Christ within you. If you believe Jesus Christ to be the light of the world and then try to hide that light under a bushel, you are a traitor both to Him and to yourself. If you wish to know why it is that orthodox Christianity has fallen into disrepute and why it is that false teachings have become popular, you need but ask yourself how much time you have spent and are spending in the proclamation of what you believe to be the truth. We need more shepherds, more physicians like Luke, more tentmakers like Paul, more men and women engaged in the walks of everyday life whose one great absorbing passion it is and shall be to know Jesus Christ and Him Crucified. The laity cannot, with any degree of justice or success, absolve itself by placing the blame for things as they are upon an inefficient ministry. We have said the shepherds were not professional preachers, but they were convincing witnesses of the Word which they disseminated.

We have traced the steps which are necessary in order

that the Christ Child may be revealed to us and within us. But one thing remains to be said. The shepherds underwent a very remarkable transformation because of their experiences. We read "and the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, even as it was spoken unto them". A little while ago as we looked upon them huddled together on Bethlehem's field we saw that they were sore afraid. They had had many experiences in their lonely careers as shepherds, some of them undoubtedly quite uncanny. They had never had any experience such as that which had now become part of their lives. It was not surprising that they were afraid. It is equally patent that, having heard the angel's message, having gone to Bethlehem, having seen the Christ Child, having been permitted to proclaim the good tidings to others, they returned in a different frame of mind. They had seen the Christ. It speaks well for them that their real Christmas celebration did not occur while on the way to Bethlehem, nor while at the manger, but that their real Christmas celebration was a subsequent act. They could not join with the angels in the "Glory to God in the highest" while filled with astonishment and amazement, but they did join with the Samaritan healed of his leprosy in not forgetting the mercies of God as soon as those mercies had manifested themselves unto them. As the shepherds return to their alloted tasks in life they are lost to view, but their work is not ended. Their hymns of praise and thanksgiving sing themselves down through the ages. Our lives have been strengthened because of our contact with their lives, just as their lives have been strengthened because of their contact with the Christ Child.

VII.

SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS.

LUKE 2: 34, 35, 38.

"And Simeon blessed them and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the falling and rising up of many in Israel; and for a sign which is spoken against; yea and a sword shall pierce through thine own soul; that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed.

"And coming up at that very hour she (Anna) gave thanks unto God and spake of him to all that were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem."

It is not the easiest thing imaginable to take a child from underneath the branches of the Christmas tree, from toys that are alluring, from new books that have a peculiar charm, from sweets that are tempting, and from companions filled with the joyous spirit of Christmastide that evinces itself in a local setting, to a nook opposite the tree in order to speak to the child seriously and wholeheartedly of the real meaning of the birth of Jesus into this world. Difficult as the task may be, it is important and essential if the child is to learn one of the greatest lessons of life. As it is not easy to draw the child from its toys, it is sometimes very much more difficult to draw adults from a purely superficial, temporal celebration, from feastings and journeyings, from good-natured felicitations and buoyant hilarity to a serious consideration of the meaning of the nativity. And yet that is just exactly what the gospel lesson for this day seeks to achieve. Joseph and Mary have been basking in the joyous realization of a new life. The troubled journey to Bethlehem is ended. The shepherds have

appeared and have worshipped and lauded the babe in the manger at Bethlehem. Others have followed in the train of the shepherds until the foster father and the mother are bewildered and marvel at the homage paid their child. Joseph and Mary are not to suffer the effects of an illusion. They are not to go further without being informed of the real significance of this child's birth and, lest those who have been anxiously waiting for the consolation of Israel shall be deceived into believing false teachings and shall be aroused to false hopes, they, too, are to be recipients of an important message. This day's sermon is addressed to those who are Christ's and to them who ought to be Christ's and speaks to them clearly of the life which is to be theirs in consequence of this birth.

There are two very distorted views of Christian life and its manifestation current among us. According to the first of these opinions Christianity cannot be thought of otherwise than as a constant feeling of buoyancy, a constant joy, an undying sense of pleasure and gratification. The story of the man who was very successful in his daily work because he made it a rule of his life to be cheerful at all times impresses our age much more than the story of the prophets whose burdens were at times almost too heavy for them and caused them to be very much dejected, or even the story of "the Man of Sorrows" Who was acquainted with grief. One of the fundamental teachings of a sect in our midst that has been making inroads among us, concerns the cheerful demeanor of its devotees toward each other and those without their own fold. In the ranks of this sect it is looked upon as heresy to vent grief, to express sorrow, to acknowledge pain, to be downcast. Religion to such persons as these is an onward march toward the light, and there must be no obstacles, no obstructions of any sort, no hindrances placed in the path. It is necessary

to ignore or discount shadows. Many critics of the Christian church assume this attitude in their discussions concerning the necessary manifestation of Christian life.

According to the second distorted view of Christianity current among us, a view not held by the critics of the church, but by some devout members of the church, Christianity cannot be thought of seriously otherwise than as a groaning by night and by day, an agonizing which, though it cannot find adequate expression, is intelligible to a large circle. It is the spirit of the monastery and the convent, the spirit of the desert and the wilderness, the outburst of the only remembered word of psalmody: "how long, O Lord, how long"? It sees no legitimate pleasure in the Christmas tree. It has no place for carols in its hymnody. Christianity consists in one torment after the other, with no joy in sight until the gates of heaven are reached.

The gospel lesson for this day indicates very clearly that the whole truth cannot be found in either of these views of life, that Christianity is neither, on the one hand, a constant manifestation of outward joy and pleasure, nor, on the other hand, a manifestation of unyielding pain and loneliness and sorrow. The grandparent seated on the couch over against the Christmas tree, having experienced the various moods of life, having remained true to the gospel of Christ throughout life, is best fitted to tell both children and adults somewhat of the meaning of Jesus' birth. The aged prophet and prophetess, who have spent so much of life in and near the temple, are well fitted to speak to us today as they desire to convey the message of the two-fold meaning and manifestation of Christian life. Joy and sorrow, peace and war, happiness and unhappiness, these opposing factors are to continue their existence upon earth, not in the confused, at times muffled, indistinct intermingling

hitherto noticeable, but in a clearly defined, well-understood, appreciable struggle within the same breast of emotions diametrically opposed to each other. The preaching of Simeon and of Anna outlined in this day's lesson is radically different, and yet they do not disagree. On the other hand, they emphasize supplementary truths. In considering these truths separately and then molding them into a closely welded conception of Christian life we shall have accomplished a very concrete and important purpose.

Transitional eras demand heroic figures. The period of turning from a covenant of type to a covenant of fulfilment calls for patience, calmness, a keen vision and, above all, an invincible faith. If we could throw upon the screen the portraitures of those who were chosen to take part in this great era we should undoubtedly call forth many expressions of astonishment at the unthought of resources of God called into play whenever the occasion demands. Of all the heroes of this era undoubtedly John the Baptist stands first, but Simeon is not far behind. An aged man, he appears upon the scene with all the authority of the past. An interested participant in the greatest deed of his day, he appears before us as one vitally interested in the present. A seer of remarkable vision, he appears to all ages the leader of a great choir whose sphere it is throughout the ages to chant a hymn of praise and of salvation. The message of this remarkable man, not in and through the words of the Nunc Dimittis, but as it is addressed to Mary specifically is of vast significance to all who are willing to ascribe allegiance to the new-born king. "Behold, this child is set for the falling and rising up of many in Israel; and for a sign which is spoken against; yea, and a sword shall pierce through thine own soul; that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed." Simeon rightly distinguished between the sham religion of his day and

real religion. He knew there must be a separation of the chaff from the wheat. He knew there were many round about him engaging in the temple service, many eagerly repeating the terms "Lord, Lord" who did not know their Lord and would not know Him on His appearance. He recognized, as few of his age did, the line of cleavage which would be established forever by the coming of the Christ Child. He could see with prophetic eye the separation being effected whereby fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends in confessing or rejecting Christ, were to assert a greater than human love, and sacrifice at great cost purely temporal relationships. Simeon did not mean that there would be successive troughs and crests on the great sea of the history of Israel. The fallings and risings are not the falling and rising of Israel, but the falling and rising of many in Israel. These words of Simeon apply to us. The coming of the Christ Child has already influenced the lives of those here present. The importance of this event must be conveyed to you in such a way that you, with Mary, will realize the impossibility of the establishment of perfect peace and the impossibility of continuing as before. Nothing is more tragical in all this world than the offense of the cross. Nothing is more serious to the earnest Christian pastor than the final decision of individual men and women who for a season have attended religious instruction that they cannot take the final step and seal their desire to know Jesus with the public confession of Jesus. Recently a pastor who had had such an experience spoke about it to a member of his parish who is engaged in active business life. This man said: "Surely you cannot expect to win every person you come into contact with. In business we do not expect to win out every time." There is a great difference, however, between commercial contracts and human souls. The commercial contract if not won

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by one man is won by another. The commercial contract is of temporal value at best to the man who ultimately wins it, but the soul is of eternal value, and if not won for Christ, must be the property of Satan. There are no half-way measures. There is no justification for the display of a lukewarm tendency. The nativity must produce one of two effects in your life, either your fall or your rise. Which shall it be?

Perhaps your indecision, if there has been such, has been due to what others have said about this child. We shall touch, in a subsequent sermon, upon some of the enemies of Christ. It is necessary at this point simply to point out that if this sign has been spoken against during twenty centuries, history has but fulfilled the prophecy of Simeon and has stressed the truth and validity of his message. But if you with Mary do believe in this child, if you with her are going to be true to the child, whatever may occur, you with her must be reminded that your life as a Christian will not assert itself uninterruptedly as a pleasant, delightful, sunny journey. If you are going to be true to Christ and because of your loyalty to Him true to your neighbors, if there is to be in your hearts a consuming passion that all persons may come to a knowledge of the truth in Christ, you will undoubtedly feel the coldness of the steel pressed against your heart, the sharp pain as the blade pierces it, and the consequent weakness as your life-blood is ebbing in the service of the Christ. You will recognize the injustice meted out to Jesus and you will suffer with Him. The tears of the peasants who witness the Oberammergau Passion Play are not to be looked upon as superstitious trifles as they are by some American tourists, but as the expression of a compassion and suffering much more vital than that of some of the critics of those who cannot control their feelings as they view a regularly recurrent spectacle of the agony and death of

Jesus for the sins of the world. Perhaps this emphasis upon Simeon's message has been sufficient to point out the fallacy of any conception of Christian life which ignores the thorns and thistles, the wounds and sores, the sin and sorrow in our environment. The life of the Christian is not an easy thing.

Simeon, a righteous and devout man, a gentleman of the old and true school, has been commissioned to bring a trying message to Mary, a mother ever to be known as the mother of sorrows. Anna, a prophetess whose austerity is implied, if not directly expressed, is chosen on the other hand, to bring a message of good will and cheer, a gospel, to all them that were looking for the redemption of Israel. There can be no greater contrast than that here displayed. Simeon addressing Mary in terms of moderation and reserve and gentle warning; Anna, the prophetess, addressing the masses in unmistakable terms of gratitude for the salvation that has been wrought, a sermon growing out of her prayer of thanksgiving. Thus is illustrated the wonderful adaptability of our Christian life to the circumstances which environ us. We are to be all things to all men. We can rejoice with those who rejoice and we naturally weep with those who weep. Simeon asserts and illustrates the attitude to be assumed in dealing with ourselves in the spirit of self-examination. We are not to be deluded with false hopes, false dreams, false ambitions, false desires. This very process of self-examination will fit us to look out upon the world as we should and as Anna has taught us, with deeply grateful hearts, ready and anxious to proclaim to others the unsearchable riches of God contained in unfathomable and inexhaustible mines of grace and truth.

Place Simeon and Anna side by side. Appropriate the message of one as of the other and you will understand somewhat of the meaning of the well-developed,

fully-rounded Christian life, a life that is happy and serious at once, a life that knows a peace and joy that pass understanding, a life which, in spending itself for others, is endeavoring to follow in the footsteps of Him Who is alike the Light of the world and the Lamb of God.

VIII.

NEW YEAR.

LUKE 2:21.

"And when eight days were fulfilled for circumcizing him, his name was called Jesus, which was so called by the angel before he was conceived in the womb."

Ought we be willing to pass from the old year into the new without a bit of reflection concerning the significance of the step which we are forced to take whether we like it or not? Perhaps we have misused our opportunities in the past, perhaps the year that closed last night was spent in dreaming, in useless endeavor, in the doing of harmful things, in the thinking of harmful thoughts, in the speaking of harmful words. We are to think of the past just long enough to acknowledge our folly, just long enough to think of and thank God for mercies that have been new with every recurring day and having done that we are to reflect for a little while upon the immediate future. We are to know that each new year marks a crisis in our lives, a threshold we are to cross, a new room we are to enter, a new temple to be occupied, a new life to be lived. Each new year is just one additional opportunity God affords us to mend our ways and come to true repentance ere the day of grace be ended. It is most appropriate, therefore, that we should have assembled in God's house this morning to give heed to the one verse that constitutes the gospel lesson for this day. The one thing this verse would teach us above everything else concerns the normal progression of religion in life. We are to weigh our lives this day in the

scales of religious certitude, of religious progress or of religious retardation. How far have we come and how far shall we be able to get before our journey is ended?

As we think of the beginnings of religion in the individual life we are amazed at the rapid and successive strides in the life of Jesus. The days of the new year are to be associated with days of babyhood and childhood. The new year is to present to us new opportunities to become like unto one of these little children. We are permitted to go one step further and say the new year is a new opportunity to follow and have our children follow in the steps of the Christ Child. As we study the life of this manger babe and as we ask ourselves again when ought religion begin in the life of the individual the answer is clearly indicated in this day's gospel lesson. The last words of the verse must not be passed over in silence. They must not be slurred over because of mock modesty. They are too important to be ignored. The name of Jesus was so named by the angel before he was conceived in the womb of Mary. The reference in this second chapter of Luke is to the explicit statement found in the first chapter in which we are told how "the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And he came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee. But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this might be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God. And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus." We are amazed at the deliberateness of the story, the natural or rather the supernatural, orderly progression of events. We learn from it all that the religious life of Jesus began

before His conception and we are to learn as well that the religious life of the child entrusted to us by a loving Father is not to begin at some time or other after birth, but at some time preceding conception. How carefully we prepare for every phase of life except the religious. How tenderly we think of the advent of the little one and how busy we are to see that nothing has been forgotten, nothing neglected that will lend to his comfort and happiness. There is something which many of us forget, but which a true Christian mother cannot and does not forget: she needs God's help both for herself and her little one, and she is not ashamed to ask it. When we are told over and over again that a great man is the son of a great mother we are told a truth which needs to be restated constantly. Augustine's mother and her prayers, you have them over and over again in life. You are the sponsor of the new life that begins this day and will continue during the year provided you live that long. You ought to have weighed it all before today. Are you going to treat this new life as a sacred trust, as a mother would treat it, or are you going to heap upon it all the ridicule you can muster? Are you going to environ the year with religious thoughts and lofty aspirations, or is it to be simply one of a number of similarly constituted, live and let live chapters of a trashy novel?

The first thought of and for the babe is that of the mother. The second thought is that of the parents acting in conjunction. We are allowed to feel that Joseph was interested in this child, but the interest of Joseph is not a separate interest. From the manger scene to the temple scene Joseph is always by the side of Mary, counseling, protecting, serving. "And when eight days were fulfilled for circumcizing him" Joseph and Mary are to be thought of as conjointly planning to carry out the provision of the law of Israel. A Christian mother

needs to be reinforced and helped in her desire for her child. The plans of many a consecrated mother are thwarted and brought to nought by the lack of sympathy and the lack of co-operation on the part of a careless, lax, indifferent or unbelieving father. When the child has begun its career it needs all the protection, all the helpfulness, all the strength of the father to supplement the love of the mother. The new year is a new child in your home. It needs to be treated as such. It must be environed with all the positive forces which can be mustered. The first and strongest tie to be established is that of dependence upon a good and gracious Father Who is abundantly able to help you care for this trust, to convert its difficult problems into helpful solutions, its sorrows into blessed joys, its everyday routine into sentinels of eternity.

In our consideration of the normal progression of religion in life we have thought of the beginning of religion in individual life. We have traced that beginning to the grace of God Who sends His holy angels as guardians of the new life and we have seen how important is the environing love and devotion and faith of the mother, the supporting strength of the father. We are to think for a moment of the progressive assertion of religion in life. As we ponder upon this gospel for new year's day we are of course reminded of the outward conformity which it prescribes and records. There is no exception presented in the story of the babe of Bethlehem. Jesus is not exempt because He is Jesus, from the various ceremonies prescribed for Jewish children. Milton puts it thus:

> Ye flaming powers, and winged warriors bright,
> That erst with music and triumphant song,
> First heard by happy watchful shepherds ear,
> So sweetly sung your joy the clouds along
> Through the soft silence of the listening night;

Now mourn, and if sad share with us to bear
Your fiery essence can distil no tear,
Burn in your sighs, and borrow
Seas wept from our deep sorrow:
He who with all heav'n's heraldry whilere
Entered the world, now bleeds to give us ease;
Alas, how soon our sin
Sore doth begin
His infancy to seize!
O more exceeding love, or law more just!
Just law indeed, but more exceeding love!
For we by rightful doom remediless
Were lost in death, till he that dwelt above
High throned in secret bliss, for us frail dust
Emptied his glory, ev'n to nakedness;
And that great covenant which we still transgress
Entirely satisfied,
And the full wrath beside
Of vengeful justice bore for our excess,
And seals obedience first, with wounding smart,
This day, but O ere long,
Huge pangs and strong
Will pierce more near his heart.

The circumcision which this day commemorates marks the blood covenant admission of Jesus into the privilege of fellowship with the God of Israel as a son of Israel. The shedding of His blood thus early in life is but the beginning of the way of the cross. In how far shall there be outward conformity in our religious life during the course of the year that is beginning? In just as far as the Christian church is the body of Christ. Israel was the chosen son of God in the days of Jesus. There was no alternative for Jesus. The Jesus Who was to die for the whole world was to associate Himself with that part of the world which confessed its faith in the true, living God. There is no alternative for you. Outward conformity on the part of Jesus did not imply His sanction upon all for which Israel stood in His days. Your allegiance to the Christian church, your outward con-

formity does not commit you to its abuses and its shortcomings, but your lack of conformity, your unwillingness to confess your Lord publicly, your unwillingness to be associated with brethren of whom you are ashamed, these things will assuredly subject you to the judgment, the stern judgment of Christ, "whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven." Outward conformity brings with it personal sacrifice and suffering. It is so much easier to go one's own way, to subject oneself to no restrictions, to vow obedience to no one, to put one's faith in no one other than self, than to march in step, to lose one's identity, to obey orders even unto death. It is much harder to conquer self and efface self for the purpose of doing the Father's will. It is not easy for our sons to march deliberately into the jaws of death and yet if they are doing that not because they have been drafted, but because they believe that thereby they are helping the world onward and upward in its march from tyranny and oppression to international brotherhood and Christian fellowship, are they not, in accepting the challenge, proving themselves to be loyal followers of Jesus Christ? It is this thought and this thought only that supports and can support parents in times like those upon which we have come. Suppose your profession of Christianity during the new year is going to make you the laughing stock of some, the object of pity of others, of contempt of still others, is that going to influence your conduct? In how far is the lack of conformity of the average man to confess Jesus Christ before men due to an unwillingness, a lack of readiness to suffer a bit with and for Christ? There must be a progressive assertion of religion in adult life. Your confirmation is but a step to the Lord's Table. Your wedding must be more than a mere civil rite. It must be the assumption of a vow to establish a Christian home. Every subsequent step in

your life must be more mature, more deliberate, more consecrated than the steps which have gone before. You must be ready for the prayer which will be offered at your deathbed. That must be a real Nunc Dimittis.

As we think on this day of the normal progression of religion in the life of the individual in the year that has begun we are reminded of the importance of beginning the year in Jesus' name and with Jesus' aim in mind. The angel of the Lord who appeared to Joseph in a dream said to him: "Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins." It is this announcement of the angel upon which Christians rely for their interpretation of the meaning of the name Jesus, the Savior, upon which the early Christians based their fond assertions concerning "Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Savior of the world." What name will you give to this new year? That, of course, will depend upon your aim in the new year. What motto will you choose that is to be written large upon the walls of your home? What battle-cry will you adopt? What slogan will energize and stimulate you to greater devotion? Shall it not be "In His Name?"

"'Tis the Name for adoration;
'Tis the Name of victory;
'Tis the Name for meditation
In this vale of misery;
'Tis the Name for veneration
By the citizens on high.

"'Tis the Name by right exalted
Over every other name;
That, when we are sore assaulted,
Puts our enemies to shame;
Strength to them who else had halted,
Eyes to blind and feet to lame."

If only we would determine during this year to apply Disraeli's statement, a statement that is not orginal with him except for its phraseology, to our religious life. He has said: "The secret of success is constancy of purpose." We can be successful as Christians only during this year as we resolve that the purpose which we have defined this morning is a sufficiently worth-while purpose to call for constancy throughout the year. Obedience, outward conformity, sacrifice and suffering if need be because of the name we bear, these are the marks of the Christian today as they were the marks of the true child of God in Jesus' day.

IX.

SUNDAY AFTER NEW YEAR.

MATTHEW 2: 13.

"Arise and take the young child and his mother and flee into Egypt and be thou there until I tell thee for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him."

The Magi have departed from the court of Herod, to which they had gone for information, and have pursued their journey to Bethlehem guided by the star. They have come into the house where Mary and the young child were and have seen both mother and child. They have fallen down and have worshipped the newborn king of the Jews. They have opened their treasures and offered Him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. They have fulfilled their mission. They have been warned of God in a dream not to return to Herod. They have heeded the warning and have gone home by another way.

Mary and Joseph are still living in somewhat of a stupor. So much has been said about their child, so many attentions have been shown this child, so many visitors have come, some to see, others to see and to worship, they are in this trance, when suddenly, after the departure of the Magi, "an angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I tell thee; for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him". The story of the flight of Mary and Joseph and the child is the story of a ready obedience. The story of the continuance of the family in Egypt until the death of Herod is the story of a sustained obedience

the resultant of faith and experience, the story of the return is the story of the eventual victory of right over mere might and cruel despotism, the story of the return to Nazareth is the story of the fulfilment of God's Word and holy purposes. The interlude, which paints the disappointed and raging king, and portrays the untold agony of the mothers of Bethlehem, indicates an attitude toward the Christ Child which cannot even today be viewed calmly, simply because the lesson has not as yet been mastered.

May it not be well for us at the very beginning of the year to pause a bit while we discuss and reflect upon some of the many influences which are employed to destroy the very existence of the Christ Child? Of course, we are not to think so much of the attempt to destroy the Child twenty centuries ago by Herod; we are to think rather of the influences in our midst which, if *allowed* to go on unchecked, will undoubtedly destroy the power the Christ Child ought even now be exerting upon our children. To fight disease we must know the disease we are fighting. To fight an enemy we must know something about him. We must be able to recognize him when we see him. We must know something of his methods in warfare and his conduct in public and in secret. Our task today is that of endeavoring properly to diagnose conditions, to force the enemy into the open, and brand him so that we may not be deceived, but that we may battle with him intelligently. Who are some of these enemies of the child Jesus? Would you not be surprised to have me tell you that just as the greatest enemy of the individual is self, the greatest enemy of the child is very frequently the parent? Of course, there is no conscious, deliberate enmity, but just because this is so, this enmity is all the more deadly and destructive. Had Joseph and Mary been left to themselves during the days

of the infancy of the Child Jesus, if there had been no angelic intervention, if God had not taken part, and a very pronounced part, in caring for the child, there is no doubt about it that they would have continued indefinitely basking in the reflected light of the homage and worship accorded their child until the soldiers of Herod would have found their way to the house from which the Magi had just departed, and, under the pretence of worship, they would have wreaked their wrath, or rather the wrath of Herod, upon the babe which was the cause of his stern decree. Suppose the angel had not intercepted the course of Mary and Joseph, suppose he had not sent true dreams to take the place of idle dreams, suppose having indicated the thing to be done he had not accompanied the holy family into Egypt, suppose having accompanied the holy family into Egypt he had left them there unprotected, suppose he had not reappeared in a dream bidding them return after the death of Herod, suppose that he had not accompanied them from Egypt to their home land, suppose he had not warned them not to return to Judaea but had permitted them to wend their way to the domain of Archelaus, suppose he had not accompanied them to Nazareth, suppose he had permitted Mary and Joseph to have their own way in the training of the boy, suppose these things and at every turn you would be confronted by a danger signal of the first magnitude, in every new line of trenches you would encounter the enemy lying in wait for the unprotected child. If this be true of the Child Jesus, how much truer is it of your own child? If it was necessary for the angel of the Lord or the Lord Himself to be constantly by the side of Mary and Joseph, how much truer is it that the angel of the Lord must constantly be by your side if you are to protect your child from the enemies of the Child Jesus, if, in other

words, you yourself are not to be an enemy of the Child Jesus.

Undoubtedly Mary and Joseph having wended their way from Nazareth to Bethlehem amid great trials, having experienced the hardship of traveling as exiles over stony and desert paths, were anxious for one of two things, either to remain for the present, at least, in Bethlehem or somewhere nearby in Judaea, or to return gladly and with reasonable pride to their own city of Nazareth. Surely if left to themselves they would not have chosen to continue their exile march to the south, to a land where their child would receive no homage, where they and their child would be altogether unknown and where their sustenance from the purely human standpoint was not assured. The dream ordering them to go down into Egypt must have come as a distinct shock to both Mary and Joseph. Their heroism in obeying the decree can only be understood as we realize that they have been prepared to commit themselves unreservedly into the keeping of God. Perhaps I am addressing the parents of children who are today subjecting their children to the same sort of dangers to which Mary and Joseph subjected Jesus in remaining at Bethlehem. Perhaps your interest in your child is purely temporal. There is nothing you would not do for your child—except one thing. You would gladly sacrifice life that your child may live, but you have been blinded and deceived by the adoration and the praises of your neighbors. They have brought gifts, to be added to your own, they have lauded what they have heralded as signs of future greatness, they have obscured, completely obscured, the figure of Herod standing in the doorway ready to pounce upon your child. More than that, they have crowded out the Christ Who has sought admission to your home that He might place His hands upon the heads of your little children and say to you: "Suffer the little children to come unto

Me and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of God." Dear parent, do not shrink from the figure. Are you with Mary and Joseph an enemy of the best interests of your child if left to your own whims and fancies? What are you doing to permit the Christ Child to enter the life of your child? Our figure is not to be confined to parents. There are other persons and other influences which effectively keep the Christ out of our lives.

Just as we were compelled to admit of Caesar Augustus that he stands forth not as a monster, unique in the annals of the world, so we must confess that Herod is by no means alone as an enemy of the child. This day's lesson has its deep moral for us in the fact that Herod is the representative of many interests in conflict, in open conflict, with the Christ Child. Edersheim, who, as is well known, has written a most scholarly life of Jesus and His times, pictures very realistically the luxurious, frivolous, sinful life of Jerusalem in the first century of the Christian era and especially in the days immediately preceding the coming of the Christ. The Jerusalem he pictures is a modern city, a very modern city. The life he portrays is distinctly modern, and the leader in this luxurious and profligate life is none other than Herod the Great, the man who, because he could not brook the existence of genealogical records which were not complimentary, flouted the children of Israel by ordering all such records to be destroyed, the man who, to curry the favor of his subjects, built a temple of surpassing magnificence while spitting in the face of God, the man who murdered whenever and whomsoever he saw fit if thereby he thought it possible to cut some gordian knot which he could not otherwise untangle. Suppose, since we seem today to be in a mood that engenders suppositions, suppose it would have been possible for some one to impress upon the mind of this low man that Jesus, the Messiah, was not to be a temporal king, suppose it had been pos-

sible to make it perfectly clear to him that Jesus did not want his earthly kingdom, would he, do you suppose, have been satisfied with such a pledge? Do you not see that Herod was shrewd enough to realize that the Herodian principle and the Christian principle could not fail to come into deadly conflict? He knew well enough that the coming of the Messiah, even though that Messiah would not wrest his land from him, was an intolerable thought. His whole life would necessarily have to be either ruined or amended. He was neither ready to amend it nor to acknowledge himself a servant of sin. This utter abandon of those who have sold themselves to Satan, this recognition on their part of the inability of the two kingdoms to stand side by side is because of an unwillingness to go one step further and acknowledge the legitimacy of the reign of Christ, the deepest tragedy in human life. Herod and the Christ Child cannot continue together. Herod is an enemy of the child Jesus. So are you, dear friends, as long as you continue to swear allegiance to self. So are you, as long as, with Herod, you hold on to the sins that are damning you and your children and driving you ever further into outer darkness.

And you, dear friend, who are ready and willing to do the bidding of the angel, may I urge you to save the child? Let no effort be too great, no pilgrimage too involved, no words too precious to save the child, the Christ Child if need be, or your child from Herod.

X.

EPIPHANY.

MATTHEW 2:2.

"We have seen His star."

The testimonies concerning the Incarnation of Jesus Christ are cumulative. We shall not here refer to the Advent messages of the angel, of Zacharias, Elizabeth, or even of John the Baptist, or the testimony of the angelic host on Bethlehem's field.

The first human testimony, following the event, is that of the shepherds. As the disciples were chosen from among the industrial classes, or the masses, in order that the cosmopolitan character of Christianity might be vindicated, and that it might be differentiated from a cult, the shepherds were to establish the claims of their pastoral ancestors, Abraham, Moses and David, and were to be the first to place a new interpretation upon the shepherd Psalm. As the disciples were called from their nets to be fishers of men, the shepherds were called from their flocks to be shepherds of men, leaders of men to the manger. This did not mean a renunciation of their occupation, as the disciples did not, even after the Resurrection, completely divorce themselves from their earthly pursuits, but it meant a return to life with a new interpretation of its meaning.

The second testimony was that of Simeon and Anna. In the first instance active men were called from their posts of duty to testify to the Incarnation. They were to be the representatives of the large class of men and women of serious purpose, with life before them, not

apt to dream dreams and see visions save as touched by the grace of God, and yet ever on the alert for the appearance of a star, ever ready for the message of good will. In this instance we have before us representatives of a life that has been lived, a purpose that has been formulated, a destiny that has been chosen, a goal in sight—representatives of a meditative class which has had opportunity to think hard and long about life's conundrums and their solution, and which has found the only logical and adequate solution in the acceptance of the Christ Child and the Christ. The homeward journey of Simeon and Anna, following their testimony, is the triumphant entry of the children of God into their Father's mansion because of the fulfilment of the promise of God, expressed in the Incarnation.

Following upon these testimonies of simple, honest folk, representing life that is and has been and is to be, it is simply another evidence of the anticipation of humanity's doubt and scepticism on the part of a loving Father, that we should be permitted, ere we turn from these testimonies concerning the Incarnation, to heed the meaning of the message of the Magi: "we have seen His star in its rising, and have come to worship Him". It does not matter much from what country the Magi set out. Persia, Arabia, Babylonia—each of these lands has been mentioned in turn as their probable home. In each of them there were astrologers about this time, and from any one of them they might have come. The testimony of the Magi is the testimony of the learned men of their day; the testimony of heathen lands, a testimony that Christ had come to "lighten the Gentiles".

The final testimony in each case follows a preliminary testimony which demands a trial of their faith. In the case of the shepherds the message "unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior" calls forth faith as the shepherds say, one to another, "let us now go even

unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord made known unto us". In the case of Simeon and Anna, life has been a long-continued assertion of faith. Their constant attendance upon temple services and ministrations was the resultant of their faith, a faith that was to find its full fruition in the coming of the Messiah. Was the faith of the Magi a lesser thing as it impelled them to seek the fruition of their hopes in subjecting themselves to a long and tedious caravan journey? The New Testament is thus born in an atmosphere of faith. As Abraham's faith was tested many centuries before when he was told to count the stars and thus count his seed, the New Testament points to but one star, it may be, but lends to it a significance which is supreme. It will be well for us to consider His star and its Significance.

Astronomy is the science of the heavens. It speaks to us of the majesty, the omnipotence and the glory of God. Astronomy has ascertained the regular recurrence of a conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter, joined a bit later by Mars, at an interval of eight hundred years, and it has traced these periods forward and backward to the time of the Nativity. Thus the carefully kept records of the Babylonians, supplemented by those of the Chinese, lead us to marvel at this telling forth by the heavens of the glory of God. Surely there is an importance to be attached to the conscientious study of the heavens, but His star does not primarily concern us as astronomers. It concerns us as a sign of His presence. Perhaps we can best explain just what we mean by distinguishing between the significance of His star for the Magi, Herod, the Innocents and ourselves.

What was the significance of this star for the Magi? Why did they leave their home? Their endeavor was an honest attempt to solve the problem of life. They were not interested in their science as you are perhaps

interested in music. You have very likely never sought to interpret life through the channels of music. You have been interested in it solely for the pleasure, the restfulness, the satisfaction it affords. Music to the true musician means more than that. It assures him of a spiritual life in which he moves. It speaks to him of the love of God. It is an interpretation of life. It forces him to interpret life in one of two ways, either as a wierdly diabolical thing, or as a sweet, heavenly thing. To the Magi the study of the heavenly bodies was part of their program of life. It was their program of life. They sought thus to interpret life. Fortunately they did not spend all their time in star gazing. They endeavored to apply the lessons which star gazing taught them. Why did they leave home? Was it to obtain a better vantage point from which to observe the peculiar constellation which had swung into their ken? Was it to consult with others eminent as star gazers? You know very well from the statement with which they greeted Herod what their purpose was in setting forth upon their journey. "Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in its rising, and are come to worship Him." The star had not appeared to them the day before. They had had abundant opportunity to be cured of any superstitious emotions, moods of frenzy or fanatical zeal on their journey, and perhaps for some time before they started, for when Herod later carried his terrible decree concerning the Innocents into execution, he ordered that all children two years of age and under must be put to death "according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men". The remarkable thing about this story is its very deliberateness. Not that they might advance their studies, but that they might worship the King of the Jews did the Magi set forth upon their pilgrimage. The constellation was not the goal of their journey. They lost sight of that,

and they expressed manifest surprise when it reappeared as they were leaving Jerusalem. Nor did they look upon an interview with Herod as their goal. They followed their star from the holy city to the little town of Bethlehem and there lost sight of it, not necessarily because the constellation was no longer visible, for we are clearly told that it stood over the house where the young child was, but because they needed no planetary constellation after having approached the Light of the World. Perhaps the court of Herod, with its recognition of scriptural truth and its lack of scriptural practice impressed them as did the sight of another so-called Holy City a subsequent seeker after truth. At any rate, the Magi returned another way, having found the object of their journey, a solution for the problem of life.

What was the meaning of this star as Herod interpreted it? His life was by no means ideal. He was a king, it is true, a king by the grace of Rome, and yet at heart hostile to Rome; king of the Jews, yet despising the people who time and again cried out: "We have no king but Caesar." He was a king whose own household was at variance with him, a king who could claim neither the respect nor the support of his people. Scripture tells us very briefly that when he heard of the appearance of the star, he was frightened. Would that the source of his fright had been deeper seated. The appearance of the star indicated the coming of the King to the Magi. It indicated the ultimate and perhaps speedy overthrow of a kingdom to Herod. It was the Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin, spoken to him. His one ambition in life was to rule. He could think of no economy, of no realm in which he would be counted a mere subject. Poor Herod, why did he not stop his notorious activity? Why did he not desist from a life of gaiety and dissipation sufficiently long to discern the direction in which he was drifting? There were scribes in his court. They knew

Scripture. They could have interpreted it for him. Shall we shift the responsibility and say they alone were to blame? The stars which drift into our ken need not be interpreted as omens of evil. They may be omens of God's good will, even though at times they are too infinitely above us to merit our assent. Herod's thoughts centered solely in the preservation of his throne. He ignored personal and national righteousness. The appearance of the Star of the Christ signifies the ultimate destruction of the sort of power, the sort of reign he represented. The door of entrance into the spiritual kingdom of the King of the Jews was open to Herod and his court. He might have accompanied the Magi in their onward march. He would have sacrificed nothing by so doing. The star of Herod was not the star of the Christ, however. The gloom and misery and darkness in Rama were caused by a conflict between these stars. The powers of darkness will ever continue to endeavor to obscure the true star. Herod will ever try to outwit the Magi. If left to himself he might have succeeded. The Magi might have been unconscious executioners of the Child, but the cruel king had not taken into consideration the presence, unseen though it was, of the angel of the Lord.

In another respect has this star influenced the children of men. The tragedy of Bethlehem known to history as "the slaughter of the Innocents" though it may have affected a very much smaller number of children than we at times imagine—it is said that there were hardly more than twenty children of two years and under in Bethlehem at the time—nevertheless becomes epochal in the history of the Christian Church, marking as it does the death of the first martyrs of the new economy. Thus early is the star supplanted by the cross as the symbol to be borne by every true Christian, for was it not he whose star it was who said: "Let a man deny himself and

take up his cross and follow me." It was Christ Who knew that it was no easy matter for any man to drink His cup or follow in His train. The gospel lesson for last Sunday ought to have made that plain.

Let me ask you, in conclusion, what is the significance of His star for you? When did that star first appear in your life? Was it in Holy Baptism, when you unconsciously were made to see the unseen world, or was it in your confirmation? Was it at some particular moment when you with others assembled at the Table of the Lord? Or did it appear to you when you were not in His House, but were, nevertheless, engaged in His business, or were you at the time of its appearance engaged in persecuting Him?

A short time ago it was my privilege to minister to a woman who has since been called from this life. She had a daughter whose duty it became to attend her every need, and the daughter attended to these needs most faithfully. A short time after, when the decease of this woman and the attention of her daughter were discussed with a friend of the family, the friend said: "This cross came at an opportune time, for the daughter was drifting. The compulsion laid upon her as a burden at first became to her a pleasurable duty and has brought a transformation in her character which is very marked." Thus the star may come to some of us in moments of joy, to others in sorrow. If we look for it we shall surely discern it.

The Magi are representatives of the Gentile world and would tell us ere the story of the Nativity must give way to other stories of the Christ that the good tidings are, without doubt, intended for all people who will arise and accompany them to Bethlehem.

XI.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

LUKE 2:49.

"Knew ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

Tradition has woven its tendrils deftly and elaborately about the childhood of Jesus. The silence of the gospels concerning His early years has been offset by the amplified versions of apocryphal literature. On the way to Egypt the infant child is made to supply a much-needed draught of cooling and refreshing water by touching a well-chosen spot with the branches of a tree. The superiority of the child Jesus over other children is clearly attested in play. Molding birds from inanimate clay He transforms these lifeless toys into animate creatures which obey His voice or touch, as caprice may seize Him, and fly away. Angered, the child Jesus transfixes a youthful playmate into an inert mass like unto Lot's wife. In the workshop of Joseph the lad proves Himself to be a genius, fashioning the most exquisite results of the carpenter's trade without adequate instruction. Wherever He appears, in His home, in His foster-father's workshop, in the market-place, among adults or among children, the genius of the child exhibits itself in magic and thaumaturgy.

Turning from this insipid traditionalism which degrades rather than exalts the Christ Child, the falsity of which is so patent it need not be refuted in the presence of Bible students, we are somewhat startled that Scripture should tell us so little about the early days and years of Jesus. We may fill in the narrative, as biographers

of the Christ have done, by presenting contemporaneous pictures of Jewish child life; but however suggestive such a course of procedure may be, it does not add to the wonderful dignity of the gospels on this subject. The preparations for the coming of the Christ Child, including the angelic messages, the record of His birth, the concise but pregnant statements concerning His subjection to the law, the visit of the Magi, His seclusion in Nazareth concerning which it is said "and the child grew, and waxed strong, filled with wisdom and the grace of God was upon Him," His appearance among the doctors in the temple at twelve years of age, and then the simple statement "and Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men," these are the gospel records which prepare the way for our appreciation of the meaning of His life. The gospel lesson for this day is important because it is the connecting link between the infancy and the manhood of Jesus, because it affords a view of the unfolding of the life of lives, because it permits us to grasp somewhat of the habits, the mental attitude and the spiritual insight of the youth. We must follow the course of the story ere we shall be able properly to point its lessons.

It may be interesting in passing to refer to the significance to be attached to childhood days spent in Galilee rather than in Judaea, in Nazareth rather than in Jerusalem. Galilee and Judaea represented the poles of Jewish life. The very physical condition of the two lands typifies their citizenship. In the country to the north, with its fields ripe unto the harvest, its green pastures, its beautifully diversified landscape, its charming sea of Galilee, in the country to the south long stretches like unto the way from Jerusalem to Jericho, barren, rocky desert tracts, valleys of the shadow of death, a sea the name of which adequately characterizes it, this fragmentary description may indicate why

the spirit of commerce and of industry, the spirit of acquisition and possession, the spirit of optimism and good will, the spirit acquired by contact with the provincial leaders of a great empire, characterized the land to the north, while the spirit of traditionalism and of strict adherence to the letter of the law, the spirit of open antagonism to the emperor and the empire of which it was a part, the spirit of study rather than of commerce held full sway in the land to the south. Nazareth and Jerusalem! There could be no greater disparity! Nazareth hidden by the hills, Jerusalem upon their summit, Nazareth a village, Jerusalem a city, Nazareth with its little synagogue and its synagogue school. Jerusalem with its temple and its learned academies! In the providence of God it was deemed wise that the Christ Child should be reared in Galilee rather than in Judaea, in Nazareth rather than in Jerusalem. His life was to be matured among the beauties of nature, not among its desolate deserts. His thoughts were to ripen with the growing grain and not with the growing seeds of discontent planted by the negative critics of their day. It surely meant much to have the child grow up in the environment of the Jewish home in Nazareth. It meant much by way of supplementary training to have this child obtain glimpses of the very different life of Judaea in the annual pilgrimages to Jerusalem.

The religious tendency of the parents of Jesus was by no means unique. Conformity to the law was an essential for the Jew. The entire environment of the Jewish people was, as we know, religious. Hence it was not to be accounted a work of superior merit for the parents of Jesus to go up to Jerusalem every year at the time of the feast of the passover. Scripture does not specifically state that Jesus did not go with Joseph and Mary to Jerusalem before He was twelve years of age. The biographers of Jesus infer that this was His first

visit from their study of contemporaneous customs. The story distinctly says that His parents went up to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. When He was twelve years of age, they went up as was their custom and He went with them. The designated number of days having been fulfilled they did not manifest any superlative spirit of religious consciousness by desiring to remain for the post-passover conferences, but set forth on their journey. We are led strongly to believe it was not the child's first journey to Jerusalem because of the unconcern of the parents about the child. They were by no means the only pilgrims from Nazareth and they were not the only pilgrims from Nazareth to betake themselves with remarkable promptitude upon the homeward journey. Hence, as the village delegation began its return pilgrimage they believed the child well cared for by kind neighbors. But as the first day of the journey passed and the child did not emerge from the midst of one of the many groups approached by the now anxious parents, they realized the necessity of returning to Jerusalem. The loss experienced, necessitated the retracing of their steps to their original goal and subsequent starting point and, true enough, there they found Him after three days, in the Temple in the midst of the Doctors "both hearing them and asking them questions". That Temple scene has been well portrayed by a master-brush and hand. The child Jesus, interpreting His Father's will, and anxious to obtain the interpretation of others in turn, the center of it all, the serious and rapt countenances of the doctors betraying the importance of the moment to them, the Temple setting betokening the importance of the place, there is no idle fancy in a picture such as this, the entire canvas lives and preaches its sermon concerning the business of life. As we stand before this great masterpiece in silent wonder the parents stood before the original of this picture a long time ere they

fully comprehended the situation and gently chided their child for what seemed to them a bit of childish disobedience. In the answer of the child we have the concise statement of the lesson the story is to teach us.

Knew ye not that I must be about my Father's business?

Again, before proceeding, it will be necessary to endeavor to catch the real meaning of the very first of the recorded utterances of our Lord. The entire verse in the authorized version to which many of us have become accustomed reads: "And He said unto them, how is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" The revised version changes the obsolete word "wist" for the living word "knew" and directs our attention to the fact that the writer of the gospel and the original translators of the gospel did not define business as the twentieth century exponents of every-day life interpret it by translating the verse: "And He said unto them, how is it that ye sought me? knew ye not that I must be in my Father's house," or, as the Greek puts it concerned in, busied with "the things of my Father". Mary has just said to her Son, "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy Father and I sought thee sorrowing." Gently but positively Jesus resents the insinuation contained in the words of His mother "thy father and I" by asserting His being engaged at the very moment of rebuke in the things of, the business of, the house of His true Father. They did not understand the saying which He spake unto them. We do! The last word "Father into Thy hands I commend my spirit" leaning heavily upon the former word "Father not my will but Thine be done," help us to interpret the first word "My Father's business, My Father's house, the things of my Father". The flash in the very midst of the darkness and seclusion of the hidden life reveals purpose of the highest order. There is concentration

of mind upon the meaning, the business of life. How very different the story of the twelve-year-old Jesus and the apocryphal stories of His childhood! The latter aim to set forth His genius, His precocious nature. There is no sign of boldness, no precocity taught in the story before us. We who have become accustomed to sitting at the feet of a musical prodigy of ten, we who have been informed of the wonderful mathematical demonstrations of a child before the mathematical faculty of one of the leading universities, surely we do not question the reasonableness of the story nor do we permit ourselves to believe it has been recorded to set forth the supremacy of the Christ Child. It has been written that we may observe the dominant passion in the Life of lives. There is purpose, religious purpose in it all. His environment assisted Him in the achievement of His purpose. Bethlehem of Judaea, Nazareth of Galilee, are hamlets far removed from the center of the mighty Roman empire, hence better adapted, not worse, for the out-working of a great purpose. The children of Israel are better adapted, not worse, for the unfolding of this purpose. Jesus, the son of Mary, is filled—not with pride or egotism—but with the burning desire to accomplish one thing and one only, but to do that well, His Father's business. Many others have attempted to do the same thing and have failed. Moses, the type of Christ, was zealous in the execution of Jehovah's business, but there were moments when he was not free from the doubts fostered by his environment and the murmurings of his people. Aaron, the high-priest, was interested in his Father's business, but unfortunately forgot that business when he became an idolatrous priest and permitted the worship of the golden calf. Jonah was sent to Ninevah on his Father's business, but at the crucial moment rebelled against the task assigned. David, a man after God's own heart, was surely interested in

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God's business, but he ignored that business to satisfy an unhallowed desire. No men ever took the Lord's business more seriously than the prophets, yet their lips must be touched with the live coals from the altar of God ere their iniquity is taken away and their sin forgiven. Do you not see the necessity for the coming of the Christ into the world to be our perfect example in doing the Father's business? That was His only passion and it was His passion that it might be our passion as well.

Environment does influence the loyal adherence to purpose. The proper environment for those who desire to ponder upon their Father's business is not that chosen by Moses and Aaron and David and Jonah and other leaders of their people in their moments of deflection, but the environment of the boy Jesus—the Temple and its service and where these are not immediately available the seclusion of Nazareth and a pious home. The first five years of the training of a Jewish child in the century in which Christ lived were devoted to the rudiments, the real rudiment being the Bible. The Bible was taught the child by the mother. Those early years of Jesus spent in companionship with His Father's Word fitted Him as nothing else could have fitted Him for the services of His Father's house, and engagement in the things of His Father.

A mind centered upon the business of life has escaped the superficiality of the age and has found its anchorage in the conviction of the ages. There were moments in the consciousness of the Virgin mother when she arose to the full meaning of life as when she uttered the Magnificat, one of the greatest of all contributions to sacred song, but ordinarily she does not comprehend her Father's business. There is a certain superficiality in her observance of the law, doing nothing more than is required. There is a certain superficiality in her conduct in the home of the young people at Cana.

There is a certain superficiality in her utter inability to comprehend her Son's mission even though the Holy Spirit has endeavored to make it very plain. Mary's superficiality can only be cured by a constant process of pondering and prayer. Is it not true that some of us at least are not as deeply interested as we should be in our Father's business because of our own superficiality or that of our environment? We have never been brought face to face with the problem of life in its richest and deepest significance. Our homes have not fostered Bible study as did the Jewish homes of old. Our fickle spirits have never rested sufficiently long to permit the Holy Spirit to begin His regenerating work in our hearts. We have never been compelled to wrestle with an unseen power.

The two extremes are most manifest today to any one who has eyes and a sense of perception. On the one hand there goes marching up and down the thoroughfare of life the great army of boys and girls, men and women who have never attacked or been attacked by a real problem because they have never had a real purpose in life. They have drifted and are drifting along ever seeking a job and never a vocation, ever seeking change and never a limitation to things worth while. The other great army also consists of men and boys, girls and women, the latter in ever-increasing numbers, who following the example of Martha, are so cumbered with much serving of a purely temporal character, so intensely interested in and laboring over a problem of a highly specialized nature they have no time to sit with Mary at the feet of Jesus and listen, simply listen. To them life has no receptive phase as it concerns the great eternal truths of the Kingdom. To them life means physical activity, tabulated results, increased vocational efficiency.

May I not plead with you this morning to break ranks if you are in one or the other of these armies? If you

are in the first army surrender your commission unconditionally. You cannot afford for your own sake to continue to be superficial. If in the second army of earnest toilers who have drifted from their moorings in view of the cares of this life leave the army not as a toiler who ceases to labor, but as a toiler who combines real labor in the acquirement of spiritual things with labor for the acquirement of material things. A passion for your Father's business will result in the adjustment of every relationship in life. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added unto you."

XII.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

JOHN 2: 4.

"Mine Hour is not yet Come."

The great stride from youth to manhood indicated in the sequence of the Gospel narrative is only exceeded by the chasm in the life of Christ in the creed we confess. In the creed, immediately after the statement concerning the birth of Christ we confess our faith in His passion. The gospel lesson for last Sunday presented to us the twelve-year-old Christ Child in the Temple, and in today's lesson we have before us the God-man Jesus, as He asserts His glory and His power in the first miracle performed at Cana of Galilee. The reason for this sudden transition is very obvious. Neither gospel nor creed profess to be biographies of Christ.

Naturally we ask ourselves: why should we begin the story of the full-grown man in this way? Would it not have been better to have begun our study of the life of Christ with the story of the temptation, so graphically described for us by several of the evangelists? Ought we not logically begin this study with the story of His baptism? Ought it not specifically mark the beginning of the work of the God-man as some have reasoned? Why should we not begin with the narrative of the calling of the twelve disciples? Was not this the most important episode at the very commencement of the labors of the Master? Again we ask ourselves, why should we begin this study with a miracle? Does not Jesus Himself say: "except ye see signs and miracles, ye will

not believe"? And when Thomas appears before the risen Christ, does He not rebuke him by saying to him: "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou has believed. Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed." Was there not in a miracle as the starting-point of His work, a concession to their weakness? Again we ask: why such a miracle as this? Why was it not a miracle of healing or of raising from the dead? Was the greatest possible power manifest in the miracle at Cana, and would it not have been better if a miracle marking the beginning of His career had been any other than this?

The answer to the various questions here propounded by many men of many schools is very clearly set forth in the story itself in the words of Jesus, when He says: "Mine hour is not yet come."

It was only the third day after His manifestation to the disciples while their faith was still very weak and they did not yet comprehend the meaning of the great transition that had taken place in their lives, when they escorted Jesus to Cana of Galilee. The mother of Jesus was well known there in a family in which there was to be a wedding feast, and through her acquaintance with the family an invitation was extended to Jesus and His disciples. She who had known her Son during all the formative years of His life—years spent in meditation and humility and helpfulness—must have been surprised to behold Him as He came to the feast, attended by a small band of disciples, for the number was not yet complete. She did not need this visible sign of His leadership. Consequently when there was found to be a lack in the provision for the feast, the mother of Jesus turned to her Son and said: "They have no wine." Jesus employing a common Greek designation, not thereby meaning to cast any aspersion upon her answered: "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is

not yet come." The harshness of the English translation hardly does justice to the question as Jesus put it. His mother proves that she was not offended by her Son's response. Going to the servants, she said: "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." Six waterpots of stone standing there, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, were to become conspicuous objects in the first miracle of Jesus, for these He commanded to be filled with water. The command was obeyed. An additional injunction that they should draw out and bear unto the Governor of the feast, was likewise heeded. The surprise of the ruler of the feast is complete. He called the bridegroom and chidingly said unto him: " 'Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine, and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good wine until now!' This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee and manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed on Him."

We have said the entire story, with the various introductory questions, revolves around the statement of Jesus, "Mine hour is not yet come." The silent years of preparation at Nazareth were spent in looking forward to that hour. What important, dignified years they must have been! Filled to the brim with holy purpose; anxious that life might be concentrated on one thing only, the accomplishment of His Father's business. There came, of course, repeatedly during those years the realization of the importance of that hour and the desire to meet that hour adequately and unflinchingly. And now that Jesus has emerged from His home at Nazareth, no longer a youth, but a full-grown man, ready to enter upon the work that the Father has given Him to do, that Father's love which has already appointed the hour, again appoints it, through Mary His mother. No longer was there to be a hesitancy concerning the mission of

life. The summons to meet the hour comes not from Mary, but simply through Mary. He who summons is the Father, utilizing Mary as the one best qualified to convey to the Son this important message. Consequently, we shall be able to understand both the injunction of Mary and the Son's response. Her injunction demands the solution of a problem which she believes that He alone can solve, and the Son's response indicates that however much He has owed to her in the past, she cannot now help Him to solve the great problem of life. He alone must do that. The summons to meet the hour comes from the Father, through His mother, but comes, as it were, as a valedictory, for these are the last recorded words of the mother of Jesus.

From this time forth, He is busily engaged in carrying out His method of meeting the hour. What is that method? Self-sacrifice! He apparently does absolutely nothing. The servants do it all. Mary lends the initiative by telling Him: "They want wine." He commands the servants to fill the water-pots with water. They do it. He commands them to draw out and bear unto the Governor. They do it. The ruler of the feast, tasting the wine, pronounces it proper for the use for which it is intended. Throughout it all there is no touch of Jesus, there is no outward demonstration of power. He who is in the center of the picture is lost completely, whereas Mary and the servants and the bridegroom and the ruler of the feast and the disciples seem to be the dominating characters. Thus He proves His method abundantly in meeting the hour, and we begin to see the importance of this gospel lesson, standing as it does, at the very threshold of His official career. Self-sacrifice through His passion: that is His method of meeting the hour. He apparently does nothing but suffer. Others are the aggressors. Others buffet and smite and commit Him to prison and weave a crown of thorns and place

a rod in His hands and rear the Cross and nail Him to the Cross. Others do it all; He simply suffers-sacrifices Himself.

And so likewise the history of the Church throughout the ages has followed the example of our blessed Lord and Master in accepting His method in meeting the hour. The Church has not always been strong in those moments when it has seemed to be outwardly most aggressive. But the greatest victories of the Church have been won in moments of suspense and self-sacrifice—moments that did not count in the eyes of the world while those moments were passing, but moments that we have come to recognize as the great crucial periods of the Church's history.

His method of meeting the hour was not only by self-sacrifice, but by sympathy as well. Christianity is something far other than Jewish Christianity. There is a divine economy in the appearance of Paul as the Apostle to the Gentiles; for had Jewish Christianity continued its sway during the first century of the Christian Era, the impress left upon history would have been far different than it has been. There was so much of the cynical, so much of legalism, so much narrowness in the Jewish conception of religion, and life as influenced by religion, that it became necessary for the Savior at the very beginning of His ministry to prove the joyfulness of Christianity, which He does by His appearance at the marriage feast. Throughout the gospels the figure of the Marriage Feast appears and reappears as the proper symbol of the Kingdom of God. Jesus is not ascetic in His person. He does not withdraw from the world, but He states very broadly and concisely in this very first incident His social position. He must appear to human beings, and He manifests Himself first of all to the human family in its most joyful moments. The sympathy which He asserts in His method in meeting the

hour sets forth very clearly the human element in Christianity as well as its joyful element. Christianity recognizes human ties and bonds. It moves in a human environment. It desires that the Christian Church shall be "the communion of the saints," but as such it need not be segregated from all interest in the affairs of this world. No picture is more human, more temporal, more illustrative of this world and the affairs of this world, than the picture of the Marriage Feast.

And thus the hour of Jesus dawned typically in the miracle before us. The water transformed into wine is like unto the change effected in passing from Judaism to Christianity. It is the change effected in passing from the thought and realm of the Roman and Greek world to the thought and realm of the Christian world. In the Roman and Greek world, there were masters of the feast, but they did not recognize by what power the water had been changed to wine. Hence, we say the transformation of the water into wine is typical of a radical reconstruction. Slavery had its day, but has been compelled to yield to nobler ideas of freedom. Woman has resumed the position accorded her by Scripture. Great social movements have been going forward. We have begun to realize the ethical value in life. We have come to a consciousness of high moral purpose, and do not permanently allow those who have no such purpose to dominate in the affairs of life. Reconstruction has taken place. The water has been turned into wine; a mystery to the master of the feast and a mystery to the children of this age, but not a mystery to the servants who know Him who commanded and it was done.

How vivid and striking an experience must this have been to John the disciple; only a few days before he had been called to this discipleship, together with those who had been the disciples of John the Baptist. They had come in from the wilderness, where their food was

locusts and wild honey. They had come from this great seething mass of frantic human beings, who objected to the truth as it was told them, and now, suddenly, he with the others has been ushered into a banquet-hall. There has been a radical transformation in his conception of religion, a joyful thing, a very human thing, a thing of power, a thing of glory and yet with it all a very spiritual thing. How remarkable the results of that one hour must have been: and now we realize the importance of this particular miracle, standing in its place at the very beginning of Christ's life work. "Mine hour is not yet come" He could say who foreknew the great purpose and meaning of His life, who realized that the hour of darkness and of the powers of this world was upon Him who had not yet tasted of the bitter agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, and who knew full well that His disciples would, even there, not be able to watch with Him for one hour. His hour did not come until there upon the Cross He looked down upon Mary His mother and John His disciple and they together were able to realize as they had never realized before the meaning of the words uttered at that marriage feast in Cana of Galilee.

And as we turn to the last, and, in many respects, the most wonderful of the books of the Bible, the Book of Revelation, we are permitted in that new heaven and new earth to appear at the marriage feast of the Lamb. His hour came as He looked down upon Mary and John and gave up the ghost, and we shall feel that our hour has come when we shall be permitted to see the fulfilment of that which even now is prophetic, when the temporal picture of the marriage feast at Cana of Galilee shall be but a poor type of the fulfilment which we shall witness in its most exalted form.

XIII.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

MATTHEW 8: 3, 13.

"And straightway his leprosy was cleansed . . . . and the servant was healed in that hour."

The manifestation of Christ's real self as a youth in the temple and as a full-grown man in the little home at Cana of Galilee is to be followed today by the consideration of the Christ as He stands before us, the helpful, sympathetic Savior of the world. It is eminently proper that as in the childhood stories the narrative of the Gentile Magi should follow immediately upon the recital of the manifestation of the child to the Judaean shepherds, Matthew should have linked the story of the healing of the Jewish leper, who is told to go, show himself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them, with the story of the centurion and his slave, the centurion again representing the Gentile world. At the very beginning of our investigations concerning the active ministry of Christ we are to realize that He stands before us as no one person in history ever appeared, the Savior not of a race, but of all races, the Savior of the world.

Another important point should not be forgotten in the consecutive study of the gospel lessons. As we are to begin our studies by observing the life of Jesus that we may be assured it is the Life of lives, we are to enter upon this consideration with eyes open to the significance of the steps we are taking. It is for this very reason that Jesus appears before us as at once the

embodiment of mercy and of power, mercy resting upon the pillars of love and justice and truth, these pillars unitedly forming the sub-structure of power. You cannot, you dare not divorce the Christ and miracles; if you do, the New Testament has lost its validity and Christ His sincerity. Right here at the beginning of our discussions for another year there is a two-fold testimony of miraculous power resulting in the exercise of divine mercy.

The great lesson which we desire to point out today on the basis of the stories before us is the lesson of Divine helpfulness in view of human helplessness. These are the two poles of life, helplessness, despair, gloom, darkness, destruction, the grave; helpfulness, hope, light, the Sun of righteousness, life. The two poles are ever contrasted in the gospel record because they are ever contrasted in life. The endeavor of the gospel records is so clearly to point to Him who is the Way, the Truth and the Life we shall never more be found in the army of the helpless, but evermore in the ranks of those who, having been lifted up, are ready to help others.

True helpfulness asserts itself in the sound advice which must be part of the very self of him who offers it and in the sound example which must make possible and re-enforce the sound advice. In both these respects Christ is and must ever remain our ideal. There are individuals who, from a human standpoint, approximate this ideal, but only as they reflect the ideal. Undoubtedly the centurion reflects the ideal and we are permitted in the stories of our text to compare and contrast the helpfulness of Christ and the centurion in order that we may appropriate to ourselves the lesson involved.

True helpfulness is well illustrated in the example of the centurion. If we turn to the account in Luke we shall find that he first sent certain elders of the Jews to Jesus to intercede for his slave. Either the duties

of the centurion made it impossible for him to go directly to the Master or he felt that representatives of the Master's own race would have greater influence with Him. In either case he does the right thing. If it was true that his duties made it impossible for him to leave his post and go to the Master, his example in believing it to be his duty to send messengers to Jesus is commendable. The excuse offered so often "I cannot come" is not a legitimate excuse. Perhaps you cannot accomplish certain things in person. Perhaps you cannot walk away from duties which God has placed directly in your path; as your duties expand, your resources will expand and there is some one awaiting your orders, ready to execute them. If, on the other hand, the centurion refrained from visiting the Master in person because he believed the commission could be better performed by those of the Master's race, he did not thereby asert his own lack of faith, as his words testify, but showed forth his exceeding great love for the slave who, according to the gospel, was "dear unto him". The centurion was, unconsciously it may be, but nevertheless truly, offering an opportunity of priceless worth to his messengers to get to know Jesus and through Him the way of life.

The evangelist again alludes to the real spirit of helpfulness on the part of the centurion in recording the exact statement of the elders on their arrival. They say to Jesus: "He is worthy that Thou shouldest do this for him; for he loveth our nation, and himself built us our synagogue." In other words, the helpfulness of the centurion asserts itself in a very practical way in the expenditure of his money in the interests of religion. The contact of this Roman officer with people of an alien race, ever ready to assert their unwillingness to accept a religion which meant little to Romans in authority, and ever ready to uphold their institutions, had undoubtedly had its effect upon the course of his life. He as a Roman

was willing to spend his money in the building of a synagogue and felt that money so spent would be wisely spent. What an example to the men and women of today! During the course of the week several great buildings in our city are to be dedicated. They have been made possible by the contributions of the Christian men and women of this city. As Christian Association buildings they are to serve a distinct purpose in the life of the community. Individuals have subscribed very heavily to the fund of over a million dollars, which has been collected and almost all of which has been raised. Friends, we ought not disparage such a work as that, but the question does arise in many minds and will not down, would not a hundred thousand dollars spent for the endowment of a church of Jesus Christ net greater results in the extension of the Kingdom of God than an equivalent sum spent for boys' and young men's clubs? Why is it again, that our men and women will subscribe heavily to philanthropic interests and very meagerly to the distinctively spiritual work of the Kingdom? Are they as truly helpful as they might be? Are they upholding the hands of their servants, or are they asking them to make bricks without straw? True helpfulness is a helpfulness that costs something.

But, after all, the truest type of helpfulness is not a helpfulness that can be measured by dollars and cents, but must be measured by service. To the casual observer the life of the centurion may not have appeared to be a life of service. The casual observer notices the giving of commands, not their reception, the authority exercised, not the freedom restrained. The casual observer notices the difference between the uniform of the centurion and that of his men. He does not notice the difference in uniform between the centurion and his superior officers. The casual observer does not realize the significance of the centurion's own words, "I also am a man set under

authority." It is because of its training in the subordination of self to the higher interests of the nation that a military training such as that afforded by Rome was a valuable asset. No man who is unwilling or unable to fit into the place in society which is rightly his can ever expect to be a vital factor in the doing of the world's work. The Roman centurion was able to master the trying situation in his home as his servant was lying there very ill, not so much because he had been trained to give commands, but rather because he had been trained to look up, to seek guidance and instructions from a higher source. This training made it possible for a proud officer of the world's greatest army of his day to subject himself at once to the best interests of his slave and the wishes of a Jewish Rabbi under whose authority he was ever after to be.

True helpfulness asserts itself in the mastery of the problems of others. Undoubtedly this is true of the centurion. Do we imagine for a moment that he built a synagogue for the Jews without having thought the matter over carefully? Does he not weigh the question of cost and expediency and uplift? Does he not realize how much of an asset that synagogue would be. Does he not realize the worth of a slave, who makes himself indispensable to his master? Does he not set wheels in motion looking to the restoration of that servant which proves the intensity of his thought? Does he not appreciate the worth of the Master of all men in deeming himself unworthy to come to that Master in person? Does he not further testify to that worth by being willing not to insist upon the personal presence of the Master, but by simply asking Him to utter the word which brings restoration? He proves to us that he knows his soldiers, their duties and their capabilities. He knows the Jews among whom it has been decreed he is to live. He knows the elders whom he despatches upon an important

errand. He knows the worth of his servant. Above all, he knows the Master. We can never be truly helpful until we have placed ourselves in the positions of those whom we would help or influence or from whom we would ask a favor that is worth while. The historians of Rome say of the centurions that they were steady and serious rather than bold and venturesome. They were men who, unlike their generals, held back as long as possible, but when once the order was given for an advance, it was executed at any cost. Isn't it true that these are the marks of true helpfulness? Isn't it true that those who would be thus characterized must be steady and serious rather than quick and venturesome? How much thought do we put into our neighbor's problems? How many sacrifices are we willing to endure for his sake?

In doing homage to the Lord the centurion loses nothing and gains very much. If only we could rid ourselves of the idea of personal station, personal worth, personal prestige in coming to the Master. If we could but forget who we are and what we are as we come into the House of the Lord in our desire to commune solely with Him, how much more of real worth the service would have in store for us and how much greater the blessing would be which we should enjoy. How much more helpful we would be as we emerge from the service to take up again the station assigned to us and now transfigured by the Spirit of Christ. After all, if we would learn the true meaning and application of helpfulness we must turn from the centurion who has revealed this virtue to us from its human standpoint to Christ who will reveal to us the essence of Divine helpfulness.

Divine helpfulness rests, of course, on Divine power and love. Undoubtedly the centurion was brought time and again into direct contact with leprosy and all sorts of disease. We are not told that he healed the sick.

We are not told that he ever pretended to do so. He was a soldier who represented the power of Rome, not a disciple who represented the power of God or a physician who represented the science of medicine. But here comes one who is sent of God, the very Son of God, moving in an atmosphere of sin and sickness, among a people whose faith is weak and needs to be strengthened, among a generation that has been accustomed to signs and wonders. The question is not so much why did Jesus resort to miracles in healing the sick, the question is rather how could Jesus have refrained from exercising the power which belonged to Him when confronted by a faith such as that of the leper, on the one hand, or the centurion, on the other. He was incarnate power and they who came to Him in true faith were ever to experience the efficacy of this power.

The helpfulness of Jesus rests upon Divine Love. He was not the cold and stoic Roman who reasoned out His position, but the sanely emotional Israelite who entered into communion with His brother, listened to his plea, and if it was found to be an honest plea, assumed the burden of the pleader, and granted his request. We cannot imagine a centurion, noble man though he was, touching the leper in order that this poor outcast might feel a brother's hand laid upon him. And yet that is just what Jesus does, the one thing no one else would do. And Jesus does it that the leper may experience the blending of power and love in one and the same never-to-be-forgotten touch.

The helpfulness of Jesus asserts itself in its power of penetration to the utmost ends of the earth. He heals the centurion's servant though he does not enter the centurion's home. Would you call this absent treatment? I would not. It was present treatment, the power of Jesus manifesting itself, not through human agencies, but directly; the unseen power of God was at

work in answer to a prayer. And this power will not limit itself to a circumscribed environment or nation. It is as manifest in the healing of the leper as it is in the healing of the centurion's servant, though the one be a Jew and the other a servant of a gentile.

Christ does not act slowly or deliberately in response to the pleadings of genuine faith. The leper is cleansed straightway. The centurion's servant is healed in that hour. Divine helpfulness is ever ready to act and does act quickly. It is so unlike the helpfulness of the centurion and of us the descendants who wait until the last moment ere we extend a helping hand and when the hand is extended we find it is too late, our brother has fallen.

The helpfulness of Jesus would teach us, furthermore, the necessity of an adequate remedy. Leprosy can be eased by us. It can be healed only by Christ. The centurion's servant might have been healed by a physician of today, but the centurion's life could not be made a better, stronger, more helpful life than it then was save by Christ. The remedy of Christ is adequate because it is nothing less than the rebuilding of the whole man. It does not mean the expulsion from the system of a germ. It does not mean the restoration of wasted tissues. It means the re-creation of man. It means putting off the old man and putting on the new.

Dear friends, the centurion's life, helpful as it was before he came into contact with Christ, was undoubtedly a vastly more helpful life after the recovery of his servant. Surely he was a Philemon and his one-time slave, his brother Onesimus, and both, disciples of Jesus.

XIV.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

MATTHEW 8: 25-26.

"And they came to him and awoke him, saying, Save, Lord; we perish. And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?"

Great crowds of people have been attracted by the preaching of Jesus. They are in nucleus, at least, the same crowds that have been listening to the sledge-hammer thrusts of John, but they have grown in numbers and they have acquired an added desire to hear. No one has ever preached as did Jesus when in the Sermon on the Mount he unfolded the real significance of the Kingdom of God and asserting its real constitution, laid down certain standards and established certain tests, standards and tests clearly emphasized in God's dealings with His people in the days of the old covenant, but misunderstood, misinterpreted and wilfully misconstrued by the very leaders of the people, some of the later representatives of whom are in His audience. Coming down from the mount, Jesus has at once sought to apply the religion He has been teaching, in His contact with individual souls. He meets a poor leper whose request to be made clean is granted. He is confronted by a centurion whose servant is lying at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. The faith of the heathen centurion is rewarded as was that of the Jewish leper. Jesus enters Peter's house simply to find himself again confronted by sickness. The mother of Peter's wife is lying sick of a fever. Jesus heals her. Do you suppose that an activity such as this can continue indefinitely without any respite

on the part of one who, though He be the Son of God, has assumed human nature? Do you not realize how very essential it was for Him to rest, especially if you bear in mind the many reverses and misunderstandings with which even now He is compelled to contend? Bear in mind the coming of the scribe whose impetuosity has made him absolutely blind to what is really involved in following Jesus withersoever He is to go. Remember also the coming of the disciple who believes it proper for Jesus to wait, to put aside His program, until he, the disciple, has gone to bury his father, a task to which others can attend, whether he has been a faithful son during his father's lifetime or not.

Jesus needs to withdraw from the multitude. He needs to withdraw from the individuals who are emerging from that multitude to harass Him with all sorts of petty questions. The surest way of withdrawing is by way of the lake and by means of the boat which has already been gotten ready for Him in response to the direct command issued to the disciples. And thus at eventide, after a day which has been a veritable benediction to the great multitude now assembled about the shores of the lake, Jesus enters into a boat and His disciples follow Him. The wondrous restfulness of the scene need not be portrayed to those whose good fortune it has been to launch their own boats or the boats of their friends at eventide for an hour or two of silent contemplation of the wonders of God manifest in the dying radiance of one orb and the rising radiance of another; in the sense, which must come to true children of God at such a time, of being alone with their Father. Jesus needed solitude. He needed rest. Solitude and rest are to be found in the boat of the disciple, not as it lies along the strand, but as it is pushed out into the deep beyond the reach of a multitude which dare not follow Him at once, though it will not forever remain behind.

The childlike trust of Jesus is beautifully portrayed in the record of the event preserved by Mark. He Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. But while He slept conditions were fast changing. A storm arose! Was it due to an earthquake beneath the lake as Matthew has been interpreted or to a great wind which swept down from the mountainside and across the bosom of the waters, as the other evangelists seem to think? This does not matter to us, for the important thing is the arising of the storm from whateyer cause. And the next important thing is to note the extraordinary fear on the part of men who are sailors as they come to the sleeping Jesus, arouse Him from the rest He so much needs and bid Him realize the condition of their boat, rapidly filling with water as the waves are dashing over the side.

Friends, is there not in the state of mind of these men a very important lesson to those of us who even yet at times experience the sense of fear in our every-day life? Is there any one person in this congregation who never has a moment of fear, induced by whatsoever cause? Are we exempt from a feeling which at some time or other seems to have possessed even the stoutest hearts of all ages? Are the great men and women of Europe today absolutely free from every pang of this dread monster's influence? Are our leaders as they face the new responsibilities of a new day absolutely fearless? Are we fearless as we face the morrow? If not, is there any cure for this malady, for surely it is a malady? Yes, friends, there is a cure for it, but in order that we may apply the remedy we must know the cause. In order that we may know the cause our diagnosis must be careful and painstaking. Was there any reason why the disciples acted as they did? Could they or would they have acted differently under other circumstances? Would such other action have promoted peace and health and life? If so, our investigation is worth while. In endeavoring to

trace the cause of fear we shall bear in mind the concrete illustration presented in the gospel lesson for this day. There is no doubt about it, the disciples, fishermen though they be, sailors though they be, accustomed to boats and the management of boats, even in crises, knowing the comparatively little lake of Galilee perfectly, have suddenly forgotten every rule of seamanship as their boat rocks wildly and dangerously in the trough and upon the crest of a raging storm. What shall they do? What can they do? Their coming to Jesus, under ordinary circumstances a most laudable thing, is at this juncture a sign of weakness and merits the rebuke with which the Master addresses them.

Fear is the fastening of the mind upon the object to be feared. When the disciples came to the sleeping Jesus with their cry, "Save, Lord; we perish," they did not place sufficient emphasis upon the first two words. They placed the emphasis upon the last two "we perish." The storm had suddenly assumed not the guise of an enemy to be fought and conquered, but the form of an invincible demon in whose presence they counted for absolutely nothing, in whose embrace their boat was but a shell, and they mere toys. Their thought of Jesus was secondary. Their thought of the storm was primary. Their great momentary concern was not a concern for the Kingdom the interests of which were being jeopardized by the storm; it was not a concern for Jesus, it is a question whether they included Him in their thought in crying out "we perish," their momentary concern was not for their families who would naturally suffer as the result of their loss. Their one thought was the storm. The one picture painted by their mental anguish was a picture of despair, of impending doom, of death. Suppose Jesus had not been in that boat at that moment, of course they would have perished. They deserved nothing more. Their mind fastened upon destruction and death invited

the very agencies of which they were afraid. Their boat was filling with water. What were they doing to offset this calamity. The storm was swooping down upon them. Why were they not driving into its very teeth bidding it defiance? Isn't it tragic to realize that a man like Peter was in that boat, a man whose impetuosity made him so strong at times, and so weak at other times? There is another classic illustration of Peter's fear which drives home the point we have been endeavoring to make. Jesus has been led away by the band of legalistic outlaws to the home of Caiaphas, the high-priest, where the scribes and elders were gathered together and this same Peter followed Him afar off because he was anxious to see the end of it all. While sitting in the court a maid came to him, and then another and a third time people came to him saying "of a truth thou art also one of them?" What was it that made Peter curse and swear? What was it that made him say, "I know not the man?" Nothing other than fear. As he sat in the semi-darkness of the court with a bad conscience, realizing undoubtedly that his place ought not to be there, but beside the Master; as he saw the guard, as he listened to the by no means uncertain conversation, he saw death staring Jesus in the face, and he saw death staring *him* in the face. One word might have sent him in to be the companion of Jesus on the via dolorosa, one statement on his part might have influenced the authorities to erect an additional cross. Peter saw it all and he shrank from it all. He was afraid. In his moment of fear he saw death and nothing else. He did not see Jesus. He did not remember the words of Jesus. He did not think of Jesus. He thought of no one except himself. He did the inevitable thing under the circumstances. His fear forced him to deny his Savior. The very thing which, in a sane moment, he would not have thought of doing, he did. Fastening the mind on an object to be feared can have but one result.

It can never end otherwise than in tragedy. We need not add further illustrations. This is exactly what happens in our moments of fear. We fasten the mind tenaciously upon the object to be feared.

Now, fastening the mind tenaciously upon the object to be feared brings about a loss of the sense of proportion and drives out of the mind the very things we need to offset the fear. As we have seen, the disciples had but one thought as they realized the severity of the storm, the thought of perishing. Their going to Jesus to arouse Him was not the act of calm, heroic men. It was rather the act of hysterical men who had lost every vestige of self, of trust, of faith, of proportion. Remember, if you please, they were not Christians when subjected to this experience; they were very weak, Jewish disciples of the Christ, and then compare their conduct with the conduct of other men of the nineteenth century, whose lives, at least some of them, were not at all times exemplary, but who, having directly or indirectly come under the influence of Christianity, could stand as heroes upon the decks of a sinking vessel helping others into lifeboats while listening to the strains of the hymn "Nearer My God to Thee" and preparing to meet their God. Surely the sinking of the Titanic reminding us of Babylon in one respect, reminds us as well of the enormous advance made by mankind through the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ in driving out fear. Fear causes a loss of the sense of proportion. It is true the storm was raging on the lake of Galilee. It is true the little boat was rapidly being filled. It is true a storm is not to be welcomed as an auspicious visitor. It is equally true the sun was shining in many regions not affected by the storm. It is true that storms constitute the intensive moments of life and yield in turn to the more extensive moments of life. The disciples thought of nothing but the storm. Jesus would have them rise above self and think of other things or at least

think of themselves, the disciples of Christ, as victors over storms. We speak of people as mono-maniacs when they have lost all sense of proportion. Fear produces mono-maniacs. We may be perfectly reasonable in every respect save one, but in giving way to fear we have allowed that one mania of ours to drive out and supplant every good and true and holy motive. If fear can thus be diagnosed as the fixing of the mind upon an undesirable and disproportionate object do you not see that it is comparatively simple to prescribe a cure?

Its cure lies in doing exactly what the disciples did, though the doing of it must be done in quite another way. They had started on a journey across the lake of Galilee, depending upon their own skill. They took Jesus along with them upon this journey as a guest, not as their pilot. They counted upon His services, if at all, as a last resort, not as essential to the beginning, continuance and ending of their journey. Contrast again, if you please, the conduct of these disciples in the emergency which has arisen, as they face death, with the conduct of the Master as a little later He faces death and realizes not its probability but its absolute certainty. They rush, as frightened, hysterical distracted children to him Who alone can help them, indicating by their rude awakening their helplessness and unbelief. On the other hand, Jesus has from the very beginning of His life upon earth entrusted Himself completely to the keeping of His Father. He has come to do His will. He listens to His voice, obeys His commands, consults with Him from day to day and from hour to hour. Jesus lives in the Father and the Father in Jesus. The Father was the pilot of Jesus' life and Jesus trusted His pilot. There is something wonderfully helpful and stimulating to every Christian in the contemplation of this relationship of the Son to the Father. If the relationship of the disciples to Jesus had at the moment of the storm on the lake been similar to

the relationship of Jesus to the Father they would have asked Jesus to help, but they would have done it in a very different spirit and in a very different manner. They had not yet learned the lesson they were about to learn. They did not realize that their journey across the lake was but typical and symbolical of the journey of life; they did not then appreciate the value of having Jesus aboard their craft as its pilot. How were they to eliminate the fear which held them captive? By according to Christ His rightful place. As soon as Christ is in command of their craft their unbelief is rebuked, their fear is driven out and the winds are rebuked. Dear friends, is it not true that it makes all the difference in the world whether Christ is simply to be a guest on your craft, allowed during at least a great part of your trip to be both out of your sight and out of your mind as He is permitted to slumber somewhere in the stern, or its pilot, in complete control of the vessel and bound to bring you safely into port? The words of Jesus addressed to the disciples are just as pertinent when addressed to us at the present day: "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" Their fear was produced because there was not some bigger faculty of mind and heart and soul to keep it out of their lives. If there had been faith in their hearts fear would have found no lodgment there. Faith produces assurance, but faith centers in personality and whereas their faith was sufficiently strong to drive them to Christ in an emergency, their faith was not sufficiently strong to keep their boat on an even keel. "They could not at that moment have said with Paul: "We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." Shall we not examine ourselves? Shall we not admit our journey has often been interfered with by storms of all sorts because we have not permitted the relationship to be established between ourselves and Christ which Christ permitted to exist between Himself and the Father? If it be

true that fear is caused by the fastening of the mind on the object to be feared it is equally true that fear will be forever banished if another, more helpful, more healthful, more vital object shall be permitted to act as an antidote. Friend, as Christ accomplished the work and the passion placed upon Him strengthened by His Father, may we with equal candour and devotion acknowledge that Jesus is the pilot of our ship.

XV.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

MATTHEW 13: 24-25.

"The Kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man that sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept his enemy came and sowed tares also among the wheat, and went away."

To the Jew of Jesus' day the parable was not unique. As he listened to the teachings of the preceptors of the race he found emerging from the discourse as its climax a parable drawn from life. But there was this great difference between the parables of Jesus and those of the Jews, in the latter everything that had been said led up to a final analogy which was apt to make the hearer forget the real lesson. For Jesus the parable was the real starting point. It was but an introduction to sustained thought concerning a difficult subject. No subject was more thoroughly misunderstood by the contemporaries of Jesus than that of the Kingdom of God and yet no subject was more important. Hence we can readily understand the emphasis placed by Jesus on parables of the Kingdom, their multiplication until every detail was illumined by parabolic teaching. And we can also understand the otherwise enigmatic statement of Jesus concerning the parables: "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables because seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And unto them is fulfilled the prophecy of

Isaiah which saith: By hearing ye shall hear and shall in no wise understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall in no wise perceive; for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest haply they should perceive with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should turn again, and I should heal them." Christ has not closed the eyes and ears and hearts of these people. He has not restrained them. He has not endeavored to make things hard for them, but they have closed their ears and eyes and hearts. They have come to ridicule and to criticise. They have come to inform Him that they have done all these things from their youth up. They have come with no real interest in the message of the Kingdom and consequently this teaching in parables means little to them, but for that matter no teaching would have meant more. Fortunately there are some in that audience who are anxious to be His disciples, anxious to learn of Him and just as the parables as mere introductory statements mean nothing to those who have hardened their hearts, they mean infinitely much to those whose hearts are open to the influences of the Spirit. And you and I with the benefit of these twenty centuries behind us find the parables of Jesus to be great storehouses of truth. The storehouses will forever remain closed to them who endeavor to seek mere mental food, but will ever remain open to those who realize the value of spiritual analogies, spiritual influences, spiritual seed-thoughts. Take, for instance, this parable concerning the tares found in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew, a chapter that teems with just such teaching concerning the Kingdom. Let us endeavor, with the help of the Spirit, to seek out its lessons. "The Kingdom of heaven," Jesus says, "is likened to a man that sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept his enemy came and sowed tares also among the wheat, and went away." The ques-

tion asked by the servants is, of course, the question we must ask, and this question concerns the disposition of the tares. What shall we do with the tares? There is a three-fold answer, the answer of the wakeful enemy, the answer of the drowsy servants and the answer of the watchful householder. The parable proves to us as so many other parables do, the keen power of observation of our Lord. We can hardly imagine any one doing just what this enemy of the householder did. It seems such a contemptible thing to do, this dastardly undoing of the beneficent activity of another, this example of spite work pure and simple. Think of the motives which prompt any such person. Think of the utter lack of principle. Think of the actual suffering involved for many who are dependent upon the fruition of the seed planted in that field. And yet we are told that this particular method of showing enmity or revenge was by no means unusual in the orient. We are told of instances in which exactly this thing was done, after a householder had spent earnest thought upon the preparation of his soil, after he had spent time and of his substance in securing the very best possible seed, after he had secured laborers to plant the seed, after everything had been done that the human mind and hands can do in the constructive work of the world, an enemy who for some reason or other believed himself to have been wronged by this householder, in order to show his resentment went out into the field, while men slept, and in the silence and seclusion of the night planted seeds of darnel, seeds of a weed so much like the grain which the householder had planted in its first appearance, it must be given time and hence power to assert its destructive sway ere it can be discovered and rooted out. And, of course, the rooting out is a difficult, tedious and dangerous process. We of the cities and of a later Christian century may not actually go out into the fields of another man to undo the work he has there done, per-

haps because we are not engaged in agriculture, but is it not true, that acting under the inspiration of Satan, the enemy of the Kingdom of God, we are far too often engaged in the very thing we here brand as despicable. In the unjust judgments which we subtly and in a sometimes concealed manner render concerning others, in the attempt to resort to unfair business methods, in the rivalries which have passed the stage of good-natured competition, in the effort to undermine the faith and Christian life of another, by thought and word and deed, we are, day by day, doing or attempting to do just what this enemy of the oriental householder did. And, strange and sad to say, we practice these methods until, with the enemy of the parable, we believe ourselves to be justified in doing what we do. In answer to the question, "What shall we do with the existing tares," the wakeful enemy answers: "your weak efforts will not change the order of the universe nor will they change the course of a single life. There are certain forces at work and they will continue to work until the end of time. In the economy of things there is a place for tares otherwise they would not exist, hence it is best to look upon them as part of this world and if necessary utilize them." Of course, this wakeful enemy, though he reasons thus, proves by his action that his thought and his deed have not been brought into complete subjection to the thought of the world about him. He is not in full accord with the best thought, represented by the conscience of his neighbors, and that is the reason the man who reasons in this way acts quietly, stealthily, secretly, clandestinely. He cannot afford to work by day for he still cherishes the esteem of his fellow-citizens. Another reason why he dare not work by day is because by doing so he would be brought into direct conflict with the forces of righteousness and he is shrewd enough to know that that is unwise, as it eventually means his overthrow. In a

recent story picturing a prevalent phase of life, a man who engages in certain ventures in disposing of securities which possess no value and concerning which he knows that they possess no value, is asked by a friend: "'Do you re-visit the people to whom you have sold these stocks? Do you find they continue to be your friends?" Without any apparent shame the destroyer of honest intercourse among men answers: "No, as a rule, I do not find it possible to interest persons a second time, and as for holding them as friends, that, too, is often impossible, but then, you know, there is a certain fascination in dealing with new faces and in making new friends." There are men and women today, some readily distinguishable, others not so easily pointed out, who engage in this dastardly work of destroying trust, of tearing down the buildings that have been reared with great effort, of uprooting plants that have been nurtured with great care, of undoing the work in which honest men and women engage. It has been pointed out that the parables of Jesus were all of them uttered as a protest against the false standards, the false accusations, the subtle thrusts and questionings of the enemies of Jesus; they were called forth by the regular nightly prowling of the Pharisees and scribes and perhaps of others who ought equally be censured. These false leaders were not the servants of the living God as people supposed them to be, they were tools, pliable tools in the hands of Satan. Of course, Jesus means that Satan is the enemy of the Kingdom of God. He means that Satan is he who is sowing seeds of weeds where good seed has already been planted. Jesus knows with whom He has to wage warfare. He knows that this conflict is being carried on with one who works secretly and He knows that Satan employs tools. We ought not to divert our attention from the real meaning of the parable and the proper interpretation of its characters, but as the parables are answers

to the craftiness of the Pharisees they ought still to be looked upon as parables of the twentieth century life in which Satan employs real men and women to do the things he himself shrinks from doing.

There is a second answer to the question "What shall we do with the tares?" It is the answer suggested by the servants of the householder: "And the servants of the householder came and said to him, Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? Whence then hath it tares? And he said unto them, An enemy hath done this. And the servants say unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?" The surprise of the servants is evident and genuine. They have been engaged in agriculture long enough to know that the householder has sowed good seed. Their confidence in his knowledge and judgment is unimpaired as they come to apprise him of an unfortunate state of affairs and offer their services to offset the ravages which have been wrought. Let us not be unkind in our judgment of these servants. They have toiled earnestly and long. They have borne the heat and labor of the day. They have endeavored to be faithful. And yet what a correct picture of the disciples these servants present and we may say, what a correct picture of those who have, in the various ages of the church's life, been servants of their Master. They have toiled during the day. Some may have toiled during the night. But there has been a lack of concentrated, intelligent, faithful, continuous service in the vineyard. There have been too many nights when the field has been left entirely unprotected. They, the servants, have needed rest and no one will deny them this need, but there ought to have been other servants able and ready to stand sentinel in order that the field might not be left unprotected. We know that in certain districts the custom observed in the orient still prevails and that instead of make-believe men to guard the fields from the ravages of birds there

are real men to guard them from the ravages of wild beasts and of men. Too often there have been make-believe men in the Lord's vineyard and too seldom have real men stood watch as Satan endeavored to overthrow the work of the true servants. In our own time there has been a growing sense of consciousness that some of these real men and women must be the men and women who occupy the pews, not as they leave the pews and enter into a necessary official relationship, but as they recognize the duty incumbent upon laymen to further the interests of the Kingdom of God. The servants in the parable not only imitate the disciples in their desire for sleep at crucial moments, but they are very much like them in their desire so often to do the wrong thing. Their efforts are honest and well-meant, but misdirected. They follow the initiative of their contemporaries and herein again we note the keen power of observation on Christ's part. We are told that it was no unusual thing in His day in the holy land to see great bands of people in the fields, doing exactly this work of trying to get rid of weeds in growing grain. Jesus would say: There are many well-meant but misdirected efforts which must be curbed because they are harmful. To most men and women not acquainted with the situation the proposed solution appeals as a considerate remedy. Its fallacy will appear manifest as we learn more about the cultivation of fields or the cultivation of the Lord's vineyard. Hence it is important to consider the answer of the householder to the question concerning the disposition of the tares. As the servants ask him whence the tares come and add "wilt thou then that we go and gather them up"? the householder answers, "Nay, lest haply while ye gather up the tares, ye root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, gather up first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them, but

gather the wheat into my barn." Tares, a positive good; that is Satan's answer; tares, a positive evil, hence to be uprooted immediately, that is the servants' answer; tares, a positive evil, but lest we mistake wheat for tares and tares for wheat, let them both grow together until the harvest; that is the answer of the householder, the answer of Jesus and the answer of God. When the servants come to their master with their sorrowful story they are surprised to find before them one who is not at all perturbed as they are. He is even more directly affected, because the loss will rest most heavily upon him. Yet he seems to have anticipated the enemy's deed. Perhaps in view of this very anticipation the seed has been more thickly planted, which would make it all the more difficult to distinguish between the tares and the wheat. At any rate, in a very calm way, this householder who has been informed of a terrible mischief that has been wrought, instead of furthering, restrains the zeal of his servants. In restraining the zeal of his servants he eliminates many mistakes that would otherwise be made by permitting the wheat to ripen. This is one of the laws of the Kingdom of God which it is so difficult for many persons to understand. Ordinarily, of course, we would say, eradicate evil as soon as it appears. Do not permit it to exist for one moment longer than necessary. Undoubtedly this rule would be followed in the working out of the principles of the Kingdom of God if human beings could be sufficiently divine to make no mistakes in the process of sifting. But mistakes would be made as mistakes have been made whenever such efforts have been tried. The householder's zeal is not a desire to propagate tares, but a desire to garner every bit of pure wheat available. His desire is not to heap up a great pile and burn it in revenge, but to have the wheat for His barn.

XVI.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

MATTHEW 17: 2.

"He was transfigured before them and his face did shine as the sun, and his garments became white as the light."

Sometime ago an earnest Bible student, with comparatively little knowledge of the church year, asked: "Why has this most important story, representing a crisis in the life of Christ, been assigned as the gospel lesson for the sixth Sunday after Epiphany, a Sunday we so rarely celebrate?" The young man who put this question was perfectly sincere; to him the story of the Transfiguration had become an essential link in the life of Christ. He would have this story told over and over again, year after year, and not assigned to a Sunday which does not recur with successive years, but only in those years in which Easter happens to fall upon a very late day. We have recently decided the contention of the young man to be correct in assigning this lesson to the last Sunday after Epiphany, whatever that Sunday may be. The story of the Transfiguration belongs to this Sunday if you would observe the symmetry of the unfolding Christ life. Those who are responsible for the selection of our gospel lessons knew full well that this crisis, this important event, this overshadowing moment in the life of Jesus belongs nowhere else than just here. It is a necessary bridge, marking the transition from an important part of the life of Christ upon earth to a more important part, from what has been well termed the constant ascent of that life to its descent into

the valley of humiliation, suffering and death. As such a connecting link, it very properly assumes its place at the close of the Epiphany season, a season during which we have contemplated the setting forth of the glory and the power of Christ, and at the threshold of the three Sundays which mark the introduction to the Lenten season. The three evangelists, whose similar treatment of the gospel story has caused them to be grouped together, all of them refer to the approximate week which has elapsed since certain events occurred, defined by them as precursors of the Transfiguration. Unless we realize the significance of these events we shall be unprepared for the lesson of this day.

After a long, long period of preparation, after days and weeks and months and years of almost constant intercourse, after a reiteration of fundamental teachings to various audiences, not only that the multitudes might be taught, but especially also that the disciples might acquire the principles of the kingdom and be taught to communicate them to all sorts and conditions of men, after the exercise of the power of God in the restoration of many in the presence of these same disciples, realizing that this sort of intercourse, this sort of life, this sort of testimony, this sort of fellowship could not continue indefinitely, but that He must be about His Father's business in even another way, Jesus, having thus trained His disciples, having thus enkindled and fostered their faith, having converted them from uncouth, simple-minded fishermen and peasants to world forces and world teachers, is ready to ask them a question which He knows they are now prepared to answer in a sense in which they could not have answered it before. The question was not to be asked them in Galilee, amid surroundings which might have reminded them of their former life and their former unbelief, but they were to accompany Him to the parts of Caesarea Philippi and there, in an environment

which, because of its very strangeness, made them think of life more seriously than they thought of it in their home, He asked them the supreme question with which every man and every woman must at some time or other be confronted: "What think ye of Christ?" for the first question He puts to them: "Who do men say that the Son of Man is?" is but introductory to the second: "What say ye that I am?" You remember the splendid testimony of Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," a statement which calls forth from the lips of Christ the tribute: "Blessed art thou, Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father who is in heaven." At last the disciples had come far enough along their journey to know that they were in the presence of, associating with Christ, the Son of the living God. They had at last established themselves, though not as firmly as they might have, upon the rock upon which the church of Jesus Christ stands, the confession that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

The confession made both possible and necessary the subsequent intimation on the part of Christ of His suffering and death. They must learn to know that this Son of the living God has come into the world to suffer and to die and to rise again from the dead. Is it not significant that in this very narration, in the paragraph following the confession of Peter, there is a clear setting forth of one of the many moments illustrative of the weakness of Peter? Jesus, having told them of his suffering, Peter has said: "Be it far from Thee, Lord; this shall never be unto Thee," forcing from Jesus the unequivocal condemnation: "Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art a stumbling block unto me; for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men." Satan did not even then relinquish his hold upon this vacilating disciple of Christ, but continued to assail him until

he thought the battle was won in Peter's denial of Christ. The two incidents to which we have alluded somewhat at length must be understood to catch the real significance of the Transfiguration, marking as it does the culmination of the upward march and the beginning of the descent into the valley of humiliation and death.

May it not be well to sketch the story briefly lest some of us may have forgotten certain of its details? A period of about a week having elapsed since Peter's confession and the announcement of His program by Christ, before these two important moments have been lost sight of by the disciples in the routine of their busy lives and long enough after these events to have permitted them to be pondered carefully, Jesus takes three of them, the three who, as you know, constitute the inner circle, up into a mountain. We are not told what mountain. As the mountain upon which God buried Moses has never revealed the exact spot marking the grave of this great leader of Israel, as the Acts of the Apostles are brought to a sudden close ere they have told us of the death and place of burial of Paul, so Scripture has woven a halo of mystery about certain places intimately associated with the life of Christ lest we worship shrines and tombs and mountains instead of the living Christ. The mountain to which Christ went with His disciples was either Tabor or Hermon, as they journeyed some distance from or remained near to Caesarea Philippi during the important week of reflection upon the testimony to and by Christ. Of one thing we are sure, the purpose of the ascent is specified by Luke, though we scarcely need the suggestion. Luke tells us that Jesus took the three disciples and went up into the mountain "to pray." Thus the mount of Transfiguration becomes intimately associated with the garden of Gethsemane into which, at a later time, these same three disciples were taken for the same purpose and in which they succumbed to the same weak-

ness. For again Luke informs us that "Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep." In spite of their confession, in spite of Christ's announcement, they had not yet learned, nor would they ever quite learn, to pray as Jesus prayed. The need, as it appeared to them, as they climbed the mountainside and tarried upon its summit was not a spiritual, but a purely physical need. The need of the Master was spiritual rather than physical, even though the intensity of His life rendered it more reasonable that He should need rest than they. The two scenes upon the mount and in the garden are strikingly similar as Jesus stands apart from the disciples and wrestles with God in prayer. In each case He is to be confronted with ambassadors from on high. In neither case are these messengers sent to remove the cup. They accentuate its importance, but in so doing they strengthen Christ for His superhuman task. God does not endeavor to remove the cup, though Satan does. The disciples do not understand Christ. He needs the fellowship and the testimony of those who do. He feels the solitariness of His position as He has never felt it before, and the disciples need to be assured in some other way than they have been in the past that they have not been mistaken in their confession. Again Luke supplies an important detail. "As He was praying," in the very moment of His most intense intercourse with God "the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment became white and dazzling." Never has the power of prayer been more manifest than in the transfiguration which has taken place in the Christ. Prayer always transforms if it be true and sincere. Prayer always removes us from the realm of sin and establishes us in the realm of grace and of light. There is nothing illogical or unnatural in the vision which the drowsy disciples returning to full consciousness saw. "They saw His glory." And as they saw Him in His glory they saw standing by His

side two representatives of the Kingdom of God. "They saw His glory." A little later Stephen, the first martyr, saw Him in His glory as he saw "the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." A little later Saul saw Him in His glory in the light that shone round about him on his way to Damascus. A little later others saw Him in His glory, the last and greatest glory manifest to the apostles being the glory of the Self-revealer made known to John upon the island of Patmos. And even yet He reveals Himself in His glory to His true children. Returning from this bit of digression inserted to assure us of our share in every manifestation of Christ's glory, we stand with the disciples as they look upon Jesus and Moses and Elijah. It is significant that in neither of these two witnesses do we discern Abraham, the father of his people, concerning whom the contemporaries of Christ have been so constantly speaking in connection with Moses. To have seen Abraham and Moses, this would have been ideal, according to the judgment of many in that day, this would have been in strict accordance with the height of the ambition of Pharisees and scribes. But no, beside Moses the lawgiver, there stands another, mentioned first in the narrative of Mark, though even here made subservient to Moses as Mark says: "And there appeared unto them Elijah with Moses." Elijah, the prophet, the type of John the Baptist; Moses, the type of Christ, the fulfiller of the law. It is again significant that the three evangelists take care to specify distinctly that these men were seen by the disciples and not only by Christ. Again Luke supplies an important detail in telling us that they "Moses and Elijah appeared in glory, and spake of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem." Their first purpose is here clearly indicated as not being to testify of Him to the disciples, but rather to speak to Him concerning His Father's will and to strengthen Him for the impending

ordeal. He could not speak to the disciples of His death, expecting them to sympathize intelligently and feelingly with Him. And yet how very much He needed to discuss the question with some one. The crisis must be met alone, but it must be met only after proper preparation. It must be met only after consultation. It must be met only after we have had an opportunity to consult with the Father and whomsoever the Father may delegate to come to us. It must be met only in direct submission to the Father's will, which, after all, is the first step in any true exaltation.

The scene of the Transfiguration presents one of the most intensely personal and private moments in the entire life of Christ. He was justified in demanding that the disciples should tell the vision to no man, until the Son of Man be risen from the dead. Men would have misunderstood the vision as they misunderstood Him. Even the three who were with Christ misunderstood its significance, otherwise Peter could never have said what he did. Moses and Elijah were sent with no direct message for the three. "They were talking with Jesus." That is the testimony of the evangelists. There are moments of vision in our lives which are not to be converted into seasons of speech. In being permitted to see the glory of Jesus the disciples were to appropriate the gift and the vision vouchsafed to them, not to ask for the bestowal of something else. No wonder that while Peter was saying in an incoherent, meaningless way: "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if thou wilt I will make here three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah" a bright cloud overshadowed Moses and Elijah, causing their glory to be overshadowed by the greater glory of Him who was transfigured as a voice out of the cloud repeated heaven's testimony uttered once before at the Baptism of Jesus: "This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;

hear ye Him." It was not proper at such a moment even to think of ministering to Moses and Elijah. Had Peter spoken less at critical moments and meditated more ere this scene upon the mount occurred, had he been able to bury his impulsive nature more completely in the person of his Master, he might have been able, with John and James, to have rendered unnecessary the appearance of Moses and Elijah. Of course, we realize that their appearance was representative. They represent the law and the prophets which find their fulfilment in Christ. As the cloud overshadows them, it overshadows the law and the prophets of the old covenant and brings Christ into proper relief. The voice which testifies from its citadel on high emphasizes three things: First of all, it testifies of the love of God as directed toward His Son. In all that is to follow, in the moments of suffering and of anguish, in the moments of torture, of false testimonies, of denials, of betrayals, of false judgment, and of death, there is to be manifest not only a divine love for the world, but there is to be poured out upon this Son a very special portion of this love. Sometimes, however, we love those whose actions have made it impossible to say of them that we are well pleased. The first statement refers to the Father and centers our attention upon Him. The second statement refers to the Son and centers attention upon Him. The pleasure of the Father rests upon and with the Son. There is a third statement intended for Peter and for us. If Jesus is the Son of God in whom God is well pleased, He certainly comes to us with authority from on high. The nonsensical advice and suggestions of Peter must be eliminated from such an environment. Up to this very moment the disciples have followed Jesus because of what He said to them, because of their own weakness rather than because of their strength; from this moment on, they are to follow Him, not because of anything He says or does, but

because of what He is. The testimony of the voice from heaven at the baptism of Jesus was primarily intended for Jesus. "And lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon him; and lo, a voice out of the heavens saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." On the mount of Transfiguration the voice is directed to the disciples and there is added the significant, authoritative command: "Hear ye Him."

The transfiguration of life means the unfolding, the unraveling, the exposing of the real self. You cannot forever hide behind a calm exterior the lineaments of either your Lord or Satan. At some time or other you must stand forth as you really are. At some time or other your real self will stand before the world as did the real self of Jesus before the disciples. Shall your life be transfigured or disfigured? Shall it be holy, true and pure because of your willingness to listen to the voice from heaven, or shall it be unholy, untrue and impure because of your willingness to remain at the foot of the mount in the embrace and power of him who is the adversary of Christ? It does make a difference whom we serve, and this difference is traceable in the countenance and the life of the individual.

XVII.

SEPTUAGESIMA.

MATTHEW 20: 16.

"So the last shall be first, and the first last."

We dare not ignore the very great importance of this day as the first Sunday in the Easter cycle, which consists of the three Sundays of preparation, the passion season, Holy Week, Easter day, and the Sundays after Easter. We dare not ignore the importance of this day because it forms the outer gate which leads eventually into the Holy of Holies. We may speak of this day as the occasion of our entrance upon a series of meditations and studies, a beginning of the contemplation of deeds and of one great deed, constituting the very heart and core of our faith. We may speak of this day as the first moment of the eleventh hour of the day, the most intense of all hours. It is exceedingly important, therefore, that our initial meditation shall convince us of the seriousness of the moment, the seriousness of the task, the earnestness of our Lord and the necessary attitude of self. Perhaps no parable of all the parables uttered by Jesus more clearly illustrates the lessons of this day than the story of the laborers in the vineyard, narrated only by Matthew. We are reminded in this parable of the importance of gathering in the rich harvest of the vineyard promptly and we are further reminded of the grace and goodness of the householder in his dealings with the laborers. May it not be well for us to suggest a thought which is prevalent in the parable as a thought about which the lessons it teaches may be grouped? We are reminded

as we read this story that there is an intense hour during the day, an intense season during the year. The intense hour may not necessarily be an hour of sixty precious minutes, but there is a fraction of each day that means more to us than any other part of the day, a period during which we must be absolutely undisturbed in order that we may center our entire attention upon the task in hand, a period during which we cannot play, no matter how dear the friends are who beckon us and urge us to join them. As a rule, this intense hour of the day, this intense period belongs, or should belong, to the morning, when the mind is most active and there is a ready response to the dictates of every faculty. Occasionally the eleventh hour, the last hour of the day, is the intense hour, during which the account must be closed, during which the remainder of the harvest must be gathered. In a life that is ideal, there should be no eleventh hour. There should be purpose, desire, intensity, poise, activity all the day long. Unfortunately our lives are not ideal. Our religious life is not ideal and there is an intense eleventh hour in it just as there is in our daily business or vocational pursuits. The most intense period of the Christian year is undoubtedly the season upon which we are just entering. The death and resurrection of Jesus are undoubtedly objects of most vital importance for the consideration of the Christian. His thought during this entire period is to be intense as his life is to be intense. He is to be a man of prayer because his Savior was a man of prayer; he is to agonize and suffer and triumph with an agonizing, suffering, victorious Christ. Jesus presents the importance of the task which confronts His Father and Himself, in the language of the parable of the vineyard, as He presented the task confronting the disciples in the language of the parable of the sower. The world is to be likened unto a vineyard. The work of the vineyard is cumulative. The need for workers is

not equally great at all seasons. There are times when, the vines having been planted after the vineyard has been properly prepared, it is less necessary to have a large force of workers than during times of preparation, of planting, of storms, of blight, of frost, of drought, of ingathering. There is an eleventh hour in every vineyard, when the work of the vineyard must be done quickly and effectively, even at large cost, if the labors to that very moment shall not be sacrificed. Sometimes the eleventh hour and the first hour synchronize. Sometimes the intensive hour comes at noon. Sometimes the eleventh hour is the direct resultant of the first. Our first parents, in misapplying the first hour of their day, hastened the approach of the eleventh. Their vineyard might have been a garden, a paradise. They chose a thorny, rocky tract instead. Their task might have been that of supervision and enjoyment. They chose that of the laborers called at the very first hour. From the moment of the fall of the first man, the vineyard assumed a very different aspect, hence work in the vineyard became a very difficult thing. Instead of being synonymous with pleasure, it got to be a hard, grinding pursuit. Thorns and thistles, frost and heat, drought and wet seasons, rocky and hard-trodden soil, storms and hurricanes, birds and creeping things, wild beasts and thieving men, evil wishers and malicious devastators, all these infested the vineyard as tools of Satan and largely neutralized the efforts of man to regain paradise. With these obstacles to contend with by day and by night, the householder, depending solely upon human agencies, found his efforts thwarted at every turn, found his vineyard a bit more impoverished after every season of new endeavor, a bit nearer its kinship with the desert and the wilderness. The expression "the fulness of time" applied to the vineyard did not imply that the work was finished, that the fruit had ripened, that the hour had come for the vintage;

it implied, on the other hand, that if the vineyard was to be saved it had become high time to save it, that all efforts along reasonable, ordinary lines having failed to bring results, a superhuman effort must be instituted, the entire resources of heaven and earth must be engaged in this great deed which is to restore the vineyard as a garden, no longer a wilderness, a kingdom of heaven not a kingdom of earth, dominated by low desires and unholy purposes. The intense hour in the vineyard was the fulness of time, not only in which Jesus was born, but especially also the fulness of time in which he suffered and died and arose again. The entire world, a vineyard, the vineyard overgrown, overrun; the laborers, so many of them inefficient, unsympathetic, hostile, mutinous, murderous in their purposes, slaying every laborer whose inclinations and intentions were honest, this was the outlook presented to the eyes of Jesus as He set forth upon His mission. The world from Adam to Christ had gradually retrograded. The world from the day of Christ's appearance among men and the establishment of the Christian church has gradually advanced. The vineyard is more fruitful today than ever, because the crisis has been passed, the most intense hour in its history has been lived and the importance of that hour has been realized by some. Has it been fully realized by us? This brings us very naturally to a consideration of the intense hour from the standpoint of the laborers.

In the parable we are told of the growing needs of the vineyard as the work progresses. We are informed that laborers were engaged at almost all hours of the day, and are we not to infer from every class, for the work demands men and women of every conceivable talent. The first retinue of men for the vineyard was called to service "early in the morning." In the first century of the Christian era there was no eight-hour day. The parable refers to a day of twelve hours, from sunrise to sunset, or from

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six o'clock in the morning until six o'clock in the evening. The householder, having returned from his first journey to the market-place, having supervised the getting under way of those whom he had hired, discovered the inability of this body of men to cope with the situation. He did not do as we might have done. He did not discharge the men already employed and seek others. His work was too pressing for that and he too reasonable. The work must be done, and it must be done in a given time. So he set out again, went into the market-place and found others who were sent to his vineyard. The same routine is repeated several times as he finds it necessary to work more intensively. Having gone out at nine o'clock in the morning for the second time, he finds it necessary to go out at noon and again at three o'clock in the afternoon. There is but little over one hour left as he endeavors to study conditions to ascertain the possibility of concluding the work of ingathering that day. He finds again that the work will not and cannot be concluded within the limit of time allowed unless additional laborers be secured. He sets forth once more upon his errand of employment and again visits the market-place, the public employment bureau of oriental towns as it is to this day in some of our communities. It will not do, at the eleventh hour, in view of the work that is to be done, to employ anyone who is unwilling to work, anyone who will at all shirk the responsibilities imposed. Hence the question asked of the men whom he is about to employ is very searching, not calculated to arouse sympathy in the hearts of men unwilling to work, but intended to prove the mettle of those who have already shown their willingness to be of service by remaining in an opportune place to the very last hour, hoping against hope. The householder asks these men: "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" He has seen them before. They have not particularly appealed to him as able workers. He has passed them by in his earlier jour-

neyings. He would assure himself now, ere he engages them of their willingness to work. He knows their answer to be true and true men are to be trusted. They say to him: "Because no man hath hired us." They are anxious and willing to be servants. They are ready to attempt to prove, at the very last hour of the day, the seriousness of their purpose. They are engaged. They go. They work. They receive their reward.

The men of our age have spoken and written much of efficiency. They have endeavored to study men at their work. They have discovered the applicability of certain laws. They have found that men serve more cheerfully, more effectively under certain conditions than under other conditions. They have discovered that the man who works less extensively is apt to work more intensively. It would undoubtedly be unfair to many men who have "borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat" to say they have all of them proved to be unfaithful, but it is true, nevertheless, that eleventh-hour men are needed to inspire, enthuse and urge on the men who have thus far held the position of supremacy. These eleventh-hour people are like the runners in a race who are a bit slow in getting started, but who, when they have gotten under way, test and defeat the endurance and the ability of runners ahead of them and pass them just before the goal is reached. In the group of chapters of the gospel according to Matthew, of which this is one, Jesus has much to say of the unfaithfulness of the leaders of Israel, who were called by God to be servants in His vineyard, but who, because of their long, uninterrupted service, forgot that they were simply servants and stewards, acting under the instructions of their householder, fulfilling His wishes, but gradually assumed positions of unwarranted dictatorship, lording it over men who were called at other hours of the day, establishing traditions of the vineyard which they endeavored to

interpret as laws in force when they entered the vineyard, making it almost impossible for men to endure the burdens they placed upon them. If the scribes and pharisees are the laborers of the vineyard who have toiled all the day, or if the priests be looked upon as they who toiled all day and the scribes and pharisees as those who have entered the vineyard at an early hour and dictated its policies, you can readily see why there may have been this expression of satisfaction because of the results achieved by the eleventh-hour men, and this equally strong expression of dissatisfaction with the men who have misapplied their day. Or if you choose to look upon Jesus as the householder engaged in the cultivation of His Father's vineyard, assembling His disciples about Him, you cannot help realizing the force of the parable, as He speaks to them of the faithlessness of the men who have loitered in the vineyard, of their carelessness, and of their recklessness, of their intrigues and of their murderous inclinations, and then urges upon them and upon us, as those called in the eleventh hour, to be faithful to our trust, to work while it is day and to help right now to consummate the ingathering of the vintage.

A study of history is largely a study of crises, and crises are intense hours, or inversely, intense hours are crises, during which large results are wrought. Ought we not be exceedingly grateful that God's love and mercy are to be absolutely unrestrained during these crises and that He is Himself to fix the reward for service faithfully performed?

Dear friend, we have been speaking of scribes and pharisees and priests. We have been speaking in the language of the first century. Shall we not, ere we turn from the consideration of this important text, speak in the language of the twentieth century? Who are the scribes and pharisees and priests of the twentieth century? May we not perchance be included in such a summarization, we

who, as pastors and people, have assumed prerogatives which smatter of tradition rather than of the Truth? Have we at all times shown the consideration for our eleventh-hour co-workers our Master would have us show? Do we realize the supreme significance of the Savior's redemption as the suffering and death and resurrection of Him who came to call not the righteous, but sinners, not those who feel no need for an intensive Savior because they have mistakenly believed themselves to be the children of a Savior of Whom they have heard so constantly they have never felt the need of a vital, incisive, concrete subjection to the Savior's power?

XVIII.

SEXAGESIMA.

Luke 8: 5.

"The sower went forth to sow his seed."

Both Matthew and Luke place the parable of the sower and all other parables uttered by the Master after the sermon on the mount. In the sermon on the mount our Lord employed direct phraseology, words and sentences which needed no poetic instinct to interpret them. He was dealing with a re-formulation of the law for people of legalistic training, hence his language was direct, forceful and explicit.

In the story before us a great multitude has again assembled, "they of every city resorted unto Him." Jesus was still growing in popularity with the masses and the pharisees had not yet begun their open persecution. As the people assembled this time the scene is changed. The background for the preaching is not to be the mount. It is to be the lowland in the region of the sea of Galilee and the sea itself. To speak to a concourse of people such as this, with the more eager pressing so closely about Him that others might not hear and the speaker Himself be hampered, would have been impossible or, at least, impracticable. Taking in the situation at a glance, Christ ordered His disciples to push one of the boats from the shore. As we know, some of the disciples were fishermen and had their own boats. Sitting in the boat, He began to speak to them. To attract their attention from the very outset He uttered the word "hearken" recorded by Mark. They are not to listen to a statement of moral

law, but to a testimony concerning the workings of spiritual forces. The picture of nature round about them is to offer a suitable text for the pronouncement of a great truth as Jesus speaks to them in truly eastern fashion, in language of poetic import. They are to be taught that we can find traces of God's goodness and human depravity round about us.

We speak much of nature study and its educative value and then we laud the educators of the twentieth century for having taught us this lesson, entirely forgetful of the fact that Jesus was a student of nature, a keen observer of its forces, its mysteries, its workings, and a teacher of its profound lessons. His knowledge of the animal world leads Him to draw lessons from an observation of the habits of the worm, the sparrow, the serpent, the camel, the dog and the swine. He is a student of nature, represented in the rocks and streams. He speaks of the lightning sent down from heaven. He speaks repeatedly of soil and seed, of flowers and of trees, and applies the lessons of nature to the needs of man. Jesus was intensely practical. He always uttered the words most needed. On the occasion before us, for instance, He knew that His hearers were all more or less acquainted with the tilling of the soil. It was the most ancient of occupations, practised because of necessity by our first parents when they were driven from the garden of Eden, which they had proved themselves unworthy to possess.

The three parables recorded by Mark referring to the seed, of which this day's gospel lesson is the first, belong together. In the first, Christ lays the foundations, the difficult foundations for the unregenerate man, upon which the Kingdom of God is reared. In the second, He points out, in the parable of the seed which is planted and grows up while the sower sleeps, the natural and continual growth of this kingdom, and in the third, the

parable of the mustard seed, which though it is the smallest of all seeds, grows up into the largest tree, we see the splendor and consummation of this kingdom. Our gospel lesson, therefore, is a fundamental and primary study concerning the Kingdom of God. We shall consider the power of the Word of God as it is here represented by Christ under the figure of the sower and the seed.

There are certain foregone conclusions in the study of this parable. It is understood that the sower, if he be true to his vocation, shall secure the best possible seed and that he shall be convinced in his own mind that he has succeeded in this preliminary undertaking. It is further understood that he does not discriminate in the use of seeds by securing seeds of various quality for what he believes to be locations of various fruitfulness or soils of various richness. In fact, as the seed which the sower employs is of one quality only, there is no distinction drawn in this parable between good and poor soil. The soil is uniformly good, the adverse influences specified not being due to its composition, but to the addition of certain hostile forces. Applying the lesson as far as we have gone we shall speak of the seed as the Word of God. As the Lord is the sower, so are those whom He has chosen. As the true sower can use but one seed, they who are sowers in His kingdom are constrained to use this same seed which He provides. As the Lord Himself must first prepare the soil for a proper reception of the seed and must wait for the "fulness of time" ere that seed can be planted, we must follow His example. The hearts of men must be prepared for a reception of the grace of God manifest in His Word. What a strong argument this is for the liturgical service if it be engaged in devoutly and whole-heartedly, a preparation of the soil for the reception of the seed which is sown when God's Word is preached in its purity and its real life-giving power is manifest.

Four illustrations of the effect produced by the seed are presented in order that we may realize its action under the most diverse circumstances. In the first place we are told of the seed by the wayside "and as he sowed, some fell by the wayside." The sower was anxious to utilize every available bit of soil. Not any of it was to remain inoperative. Every concealed corner and edge was to receive the benefit of a doubt. Naturally some of the seed would fall upon the wayside, the path, trodden by men, at the expense of the soil. The result was natural: "It was trodden down and the fowls of the air devoured it." There are individuals who have so hardened their hearts, they will have nothing to do with the Word of God save by way of criticism. These people study their Bible hard and long, but simply to lead others astray. They are the mockers and revilers of Christianity. Eventually these people and their theories are devoured by the vultures which are ever hovering near, ready to feed upon lost lives. Fortunately, if we may use the term at all in this connection, we are dealing with a footpath, not a highway; a narrow confine, not a boundless waste; a restricted area, not a source of general infection. In answer to men and women who come in this spirit, it is ever important to pray that the Spirit of God may dictate the promptings of our hearts and minds. We shall ever bear in mind John's advice to try the spirits. We shall ever require of such heartless critics more than a mere hypothesis, more than a conjecture, more than a theory. We shall ever ask whether the solution which ends in the utter annihilation of our religious life has any validity. God never hardens the heart of anyone who does not first harden his heart against God. Pharaoh hardened his heart seven times before God hardened it for him.

Some of the seed fell upon the rock. A soil entirely free of stones is not nearly so valuable, from the agri-

cultural standpoint, as that which conceals a proper ratio of them. The elimination is to be that of the rock, not that of its disintegrated product. However careful the sower may be there will be rocks in his field. What happens because of their presence? "And as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture." The heat of the sun is needed, but it must be tempered by the moisture in the soil. Wherever it is not so tempered the resultant is that indicated in the words of Scripture just quoted. Applying this truth, we find there is a second class of persons, who attend the service of the House of God without any apparent conviction that what they are doing is an essential element in their spiritual sustenance, who read the Word of God with no sense of satisfaction after they have read it, nor with any feeling of necessity as of hunger as they approach it. The trait of this class is superficiality. Nothing is done carefully. Nothing is done thoroughly. Nothing is done as well as it might be done. Make up your minds that they who are superficial in matters of religion are superficial in the things that pertain to this life and they who are superficial in temporal matters are equally superficial in spiritual matters. There may be great religiosity on the part of people who do not take their every-day life seriously or who are unsuccessful in it, but there is a vast difference between religiosity, the show of religion, and true religion. On the other hand, there may be worldly success on the part of some who are flippant in matters of religion, but worldly success is not by any means always a resultant of ability. Superficial people are not, as a rule, phlegmatic people. They are nervous, active, energetic. They do accomplish some things, but the tragedy of it all is that their energy is so often lost energy, their labor is vain.

We arrive at the third stage. As our sower continued his task some of his seed fell among the thorns. May

I remind you again that in every instance the soil is of the same fertility. We are reaching a better state of affairs. In the first instance, the seed was sown by the wayside, where there was no possibility that it would take root. In the second instance, there was sufficient loose soil to permit it at least to take root. And now we have arrived at a state in which there is an abundance of soil. What, we ask, is the detrimental factor? And we are told the thorns. It may be that through the carelessness of a husbandman foreign seeds have been injected; it may be that through the carelessness of the plowman certain roots have not been destroyed. The thorns sprang up with the seed and choked it. The soil for both weeds and grain was the same. Both grew up together. The process once begun, it was necessary to "let both grow until the harvest." Of course, there was danger in the process. Of course, the thorns obtained a mastery of the situation. Environment does influence our lives. If our environment is bad, the struggle will be hard and serious. And yet, though the figure is imperfect, do we care to shut off every good influence, every good opportunity from those of evil inclinations? May there not be a purpose in thus merging the two, now that man has voluntarily chosen the thorns rather than the wheat, to protect him against himself? Are we not beginning to assert this principle in our punitive and corrective system?

Is not the intention of the parole the desire to have evildoers associate with persons who are morally strong, not that the morally strong may be contaminated, but that the evildoers may be converted from their evil ways? Environment does play an important role in our lives. We are not negating the rule of Christ in applying the corollary rather than the axiom. We are simply asserting the gradual acceptance of the principles of Christ in our daily program. The great leaders of the world have

been the men and women who have been strong enough to influence their environment rather than to be influenced by it. Knowing there are thorns in this world, it is important to prepare our children and our friends to withstand them. Let them learn from us and not from others the deadliness of sin, the final destruction of the good grain choked by the thorns. But having taught our children this lesson, may we teach them one thing more, that goodness and nobility and truth are not to be sought because the world admires noble, pure believing men and women, but because God would have us thus. Three classifications have been needed to describe the hindrances to the growth and spread of the Kingdom of God. History substantiates this summary. The church of Jesus Christ is not yet a triumphant church. The sower has had and is having his disappointments. He is at last to be rewarded for his industry, for the "other fell on good ground, and sprang up and bore fruit an hundredfold." Imagine the joy of the sower as he views his hundredfold crop. Yet this joy does not compare with the happiness of Him who recovers one one-hundredth of a flock. The harvest is not everywhere and always the same. It is most abundant and most sure where the growth has been slow and undisturbed, where no whirlwinds and cyclones are permitted to interfere with its development.

May God grant that we may receive His Word into truly receptive hearts and permit no birds, thorns or stones, no hostile critics, no cares of this world, no superficial pleasures or diversions to rob us of this blessed treasure!

XIX.

QUINQUAGESIMA.

LUKE 18: 31, 43.

"And he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold we go up to Jerusalem, etc. . . .

"And immediately he received his sight and followed him, glorifying God."

The gospel lesson for this day narrates the third prediction concerning Christ's passion and records an incident that occurred while Jesus and His disciples were en route to Jerusalem. The first prediction of His passion followed the splendid tribute of Peter: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." In this first prediction we miss the detailed statement of the "many things" which are enumerated in the third prophecy. The disciples needed a general setting forth of the subject before they were ready for a detailed announcement. In the second prediction (Matthew 17: 21) Jesus adds that "the Son of man shall be delivered up into the hands of men" without enumerating the men. In the prediction which forms part of the gospel lesson for this day there is a distinct advance upon the prophecies to which we have alluded. It is interesting to note that in each of these predictions Christ's death and resurrection are allied and mentioned as part of one and the same deed.

As Jesus invited His disciples to go with Him up to Jerusalem, so on this day the Christian Church invites you to go up to Jerusalem during the Lenten season, which begins next Wednesday, and lest your state of mind be that of the disciples, "they understood none

of these things," He would demonstrate the purpose of His coming into the world by proving His readiness and ability to be a light to them that sit in darkness as He speaks to the blind man by the wayside. Of course, leadership implies discipleship, and if the twelve who have been specially chosen are not ready, perhaps some one else here and there is; hence we have the injection of the story of the healing of the blind man at this point. In following certain of the details of the story we are indebted to Mark for a very graphic description. Mark indicates that Jesus and His disciples are on the march as the prophetic words are uttered. He indicates the order of the procession. Jesus is already alone as He leads the way, while the disciples are following at a respectful distance lost in wonder. They, in turn, are followed by others, whose fear is real rather than apparent. Why this amazement and this fear? Was it because Jesus had chosen to go up to Jerusalem even though others had advised Him not to do so and the disciples and the multitude were beginning to be a bit apprehensive, or was it because of the emotion which was taking possession of Christ as He walked alone to His death, conscious of the significance of that walk? The way of the cross has begun before the wooden instrument of execution is placed upon His shoulders. The first real anguish of soul has overtaken Him long before He has arrived at Gethsemane. The world tragedy does not mean the sacrifice of hundreds and thousands and millions of men while the commander stands back of them and directs the charge, escaping unscathed and riding victoriously at the head of the survivors into the conquered territory of the enemy as He dictates the terms of peace. The world tragedy reveals the Commander alone as He goes up to Jerusalem, alone as He is delivered up unto the Gentiles, alone as He is mocked, alone as He is shamefully treated, alone as He is spit upon,

alone as He is scourged, alone as He is killed, and alone as He rises from the dead.

In speaking of the leadership of Jesus Christ, we shall think briefly of the postulates of leadership, the discouragements of leadership and the encouragements of leadership, and we shall close with a word about the need of Christ's leadership.

The postulates of leadership are vision, purpose and action. When one or the other of these essential characteristics are lacking there is no true leadership. There may, for instance, be purpose and action, as there undoubtedly was in the crusades and in the French Revolution, but the leadership of those at the head of these movements lacked vision in its true perspective, hence these movements failed. There may be vision and purpose without action. Many philosophers and seers of ancient and modern times have had both. They have seen republics take form in their thought, their purpose has been the ultimate realization of this thought, but they have spent life as dreamers, not as doers. There may be vision and action without purpose. There are in our times men who have both vision and a semblance of action, but whose purpose is hazy and whose action is consequently ill-advised and harmful rather than helpful. Many of us possess one or two of the characteristics of leadership, but we fail in a proper co-ordination of the three.

During this month we are celebrating the birthdays of two Americans who have been pre-eminent leaders of men because they possessed the characteristics which we have enumerated as those inherent in leadership. Both these men possessed a large degree of vision and neither of them obtained this virtue in college halls, but through personal study and meditation and contact with ever-growing problems. To both these leaders vision and purpose were supplementary terms. Vision created pur-

pose. Purpose reinforced and extended vision. The purpose of both men can be expressed in concrete terms and implied and brought with it consequent action. The leadership of both men was essential to the welfare of the country, and we firmly believe was part of God's providential plan for the establishment and preservation of our land. Shall we deny to the man who is their successor in office and who has been called upon to be a leader of men in a pre-eminent sense, one of whom vision and purpose and action are demanded, the position which he must occupy in our regard and in our willingness to sub-ordinate self to the achievement of the purposes for which this Republic was founded?

We are to turn from this digression to the study of the uniqueness of the one leader of men, before whom all leaders must bow their knees, not the leader of a single nation of men nor of a kingdom of this world, but of all men. Ere we enter upon another Lenten season we are to consider the claims of Jesus Christ as our leader and we are to base our conclusions upon the test already outlined, the resultant of which is sufficiently indicated in our text. The vision of Jesus Christ is not synonymous with university training. The clinic in which Jesus studied was not a clinic which acknowledged the supremacy of mind, but it was a clinic acknowledging the supremacy of the soul and the spirit. Nor is the vision of Christ the resultant of extensive travels. Jesus confined His footsteps to a very limited area, never repeating His childhood experience by going down to Egypt. Constant travel may dim the true perspective and keep us from the vision we might otherwise enjoy. The vision of Jesus was not the vision of a man, but of God. The vision of Jesus was kept upon a high plane, even in moments of deepest humiliation, because of His constant communion with the Father. His vision was intensified day by day in His intercourse with men. Note His

words: "All the things that are written by the prophets shall be accomplished unto the Son of man. For He shall be delivered up unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and shamefully entreated, and spit upon; and they shall scourge and kill Him; and the third day He shall rise again." When we speak of the vision of Jesus we refer to His understanding and wisdom, in which Scripture tells us He constantly increased—and isn't it true that the growth of wisdom in the human Jesus was due to His persistent fellowship with the Father? Is it not true that He entered the synagogue and Temple because He was really anxious to do so, and not only because it was customary? Is it not true that, whereas He was always ready to give, He Himself needed to receive in large measure properly to equip Himself for His mission? And is it not true that He could not have been as interested in these services nor as helpful to those with whom He associated on such occasions if He had not come to these services with a mind and heart and soul stored with the precious truths of God's Holy Word? When He met Satan at the beginning of His ministry He was ready for Satan's use of Scripture, for He, too, had studied it and knew how to quote it more effectively than His antagonist. The point I am trying to emphasize is that the vision of Jesus was synonymous with His knowledge of the world tragedy and the hope of redemption contained in God's Holy Word. The vision is vouchsafed to you and me only as we follow in the footsteps of the Savior in keeping close to the Father and listening to His voice as contained in His Word. We are not concerned with visions, but with vision. We are not concerned with diverse interests, but with one supreme interest, and this very absorption in a single interest lends vision.

The words "behold we go up to Jerusalem" indicate purpose as well as vision. As He understood the great

world problem, He formulated long before leaving the Father's throne, the purpose which was the outcome of His vision. Why is it not feasible to rush straight from vision to action? Why must we interpose purpose to delay the process? To have before one a panorama of history is not necessarily to be an historian. To know the principal events and their dates throughout history is not to know history. The historian is he whose study of history has taught him to recognize certain fundamental causes and effects which have been at work throughout the ages. He who has caught the plan and meaning of it all, he is the true historian as he seeks to have others understand that this plan may be applied to current events and will produce recurrent effects. The historian becomes the philosopher of history. You are something more than a store-house. You are something more than a machine. You are something more than a hand. Your life is circumscribed by your vision and your vision circumscribes your purpose. That purpose will rise to ever higher altitudes as it has caught a bit of the vision of Christ and seeks to hold fast to that vision. Back of the particular work we are doing there is a plan and a purpose which, if we are wise, we shall endeavor to ascertain and further. What was the real purpose of Christ, the resultant of His vision? Was it to sit at the table of rich men in order that He might enjoy their bounty? Was it to associate with them? Was it to associate with the poor because they were poor? Was it to wander as a hermit out into the wilderness or up the mount, for the purpose of selfish or ascetic retirement? Was it to be the leader of an itinerant band of fishermen plying their trade while He talked to them or to a group of idlers? Was it to be a fanatic whose lust for martyrdom led Him to the very city which was crying out for His blood? Was it to establish within the circle in which He moved a program of social service?

Not one of these reasons has the slightest semblance of truth in it. The sole purpose of Jesus Christ in coming into the world was to fulfil the program of His Father for the salvation of souls. That He might accomplish this purpose He sat at the table of rich men. That He might accomplish this purpose He associated with the poor. That He might accomplish this purpose He went into the desert, and climbed the mount. That He might accomplish this purpose He drew unto Himself a band of disciples from among lowly fishermen who would not continually be reasoning why, but who, in a critical moment would dare both do and die. The life of Christ, viewed from this standpoint of leadership, cannot be understood unless we remember that He came into the world to save sinners. He knew that He would find them in every class of society, hence He did not associate exclusively with any one class. It is absolutely wrong to interpret His purpose, as is so often done in our day, by saying that He came into the world to ameliorate the outward lot of society. The purpose so clearly set forth in our text was ever before Him as He sojourned in His Father's house; as He accepted the challenge of Satan; as He acknowledged that His hour had not yet come in answer to premature desires and longings. As has been stated over and over again, there was but one purpose, the resultant of one vision and this could lead to but one action.

Though the Savior refers specifically to physical action as He says: "Behold we go up to Jerusalem," there is no doubt that we ought today consider not so much His outward activity, but rather the action of His mind and heart at the very moment when He uttered these words. The action of Jesus Christ, the resultant of vision and purpose, must not be construed as physical action only, but as spiritual action of a most intense nature. In fact, the word passion indicating suffering

and the passive capacity of the individual in suffering, does not at all adequately express the real activity of the soul of the sufferer. The spiritual activity of Jesus can only be apprehended, it cannot be fathomed. Ever alert, ever ready for emergencies, ever anxious to serve by precept or by deed, He was undoubtedly, and still continues to be, the one and only true leader of humanity in its heavenward climb.

Acknowledging the tests of leadership as thus indicated, and as manifest in the Christ, the episode following the words of Jesus and included in the gospel lesson is a natural sequence—the blind man sitting by the wayside begging is the symbol and type of every man, woman and child sitting in the darkness of this world needing the blessing which only the true Light of the world can offer.

XX.

ASH WEDNESDAY.

MATTHEW 6: 16, 19.

"Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may be seen of men to fast.

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal but etc."

In no respect has the intelligent appreciation of the church year developed more rapidly than in the growing observation of the season of Lent by Christians as a time particularly fitted for a consideration of the great deed which is the foundation stone of our Christian faith. The Lenten season has been subject to several lines of growth or development. In the first place, the celebration was that of a single day, soon after of two and three days, a week and at last the cycle seemed to be fixed when the period of forty days so significant in biblical history had been decided upon. It may be that the extension of the period did not at first bode an extension of interest in the Savior's passion. We can readily see that the Christians of the earliest days, whose Christianity was so real and vital they lived and moved and had their being in their Savior and their God needed not to be told during a protracted period of their Master's sufferings because they had directly experienced these sufferings and were experiencing them in their own lives daily. As we move farther from the historic Christ, as Christians are no longer persecuted, as they go about their duties no longer able to converse with the disciples of Jesus, no longer able to listen to those who have been

disciples of the disciples, as the intensiveness of the situation becomes a bit less pronounced they seek to counteract any adverse influences by prolonging the season for meditation and prayer during which they are to re-live the scenes of their Lord's sufferings. From very early times the Christian church has set apart the forty days preceding Easter, excluding Sundays, which are looked upon as feast days, as a season of fasting. Of course, this term needs to be defined, and this day's gospel offers an adequate definition.

We have touched upon the gradual lengthening of the season; it may be well for us to bear in mind that the general observance of the season on the part of those who do not belong to churches which have always had a well-defined conception of the liturgy and the church year has been introduced during the time of many now living. There is in this growing perception of the fundamental importance of the atonement a clearer and more remarkable sign of an approach on the part of the Christian church to the sort of unity Christ would have than in many other signs of the times. There must be an axis about which the Christian life shall move, and this axis is, of course, Christ, but how often the name is used without any appreciation of its significance. There is the cry of "Lord, Lord" to one who knows them not because they have never put forth any real effort to know Him, although He has offered them every opportunity to do so. Just as there must be an axis about which our Christian life must move there is an axis about which the church year must move if we are to look upon it as something more than a merely desirable mechanical arrangement for the upbuilding of life. This axis about which the church year moves is the lenten season properly conceived and properly celebrated, for the birth of Christ came about in order that He might suffer and die for us and the resurrection would have

been impossible had there been no previous death. We must, therefore, not be unmindful of the exceeding great importance of this season, and of the clear understanding of its meaning ere we enter upon it, that we may derive its blessings.

Of course, the message of the season is a proclamation of the gospel of Christ. And yet we cannot understand the real majesty and excellency of the gospel unless we have had an opportunity to compare it with the law. And that we may the better appreciate the great chasm which exists between the law and the gospel, Jesus Christ, in the sermon on the mount, interprets the law as it finds its fulfilment in Him contrasted with the law as it is interpreted by His contemporaries who are the teachers of Israel. It is important that we should give undivided attention to two Lenten commandments which He utters and orders. They bear such an important relationship to this season we cannot possibly celebrate it until we have mastered them.

The first of these two commandments concerns fasting. How wonderfully Luther, in a later century, caught the spirit of the Master when, in his catechism, in the interpretation of the commandments, he invariably touches upon their negative and positive teaching. In the teaching concerning fasting as we have it from the Master's lips there is this distinct two-fold statement. Jesus says: "When ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance; for they disfigure their faces, that they be seen of men to fast. Verily, I say unto you, they have received their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face, that thou be not seen of men to fast, but of thy Father who is in secret; and thy Father, who seeth in secret, shall recompense thee."

Fasting in the days of Jesus had assumed very great proportions. It was looked upon as a mark of religious

life and enthusiasm. Twice in the week some of these Pharisees fasted as they celebrated the ascent to and the descent from the mount by Moses or as they engaged in certain self-imposed or school-imposed fasts. The fast in Jesus' day had lost its significance very largely because it had emerged from the closet and the secret place and had assumed the rights and privileges of a public act. In its emergence it had sacrificed its very being. To the leaders of Israel the apparent fast, the fast seen of men, the disheveled appearance, the self-mortification, the going up to the temple, the foremost place in the temple, these were the important and essential elements in the act. And is it not true that to many of the twentieth century these same public demonstrations of will-power in matters of worldly abstinence and religious observance have come to be looked upon as integral parts of the fast. The fast to many of today means the ability to do without sweets, to do without the theater, to deny oneself a pleasure which is no longer a pleasure because we have indulged in it all winter and yet because of our well-known fondness for this pleasure and our post-season restraint we are admired of men, or it may be we have resolved to attend service very regularly during this period, even though we do not attend service very regularly during any other part of the year, or, having attended service regularly during the year, we feel we must increase our devotion and our activity. In all these acts of restraint or of indulgence there is a public manifestation of our inner life, or our supposedly inner life. Of course, no one will and no one can disparage the deeds of the man or woman wedded to Christ. No one will for a moment think of censuring the Lenten restraint of those who are ever able to assert a constant control over their bodies or of misjudging the Lenten enthusiasm of those whose knowledge of and love for Christ assert themselves in in-

creased attendance upon the services of the church. But Jesus does criticise very sharply a fasting which is engaged in "to be seen of men." He says: "Be not as the hypocrites" and you will, of course, naturally be led to think of the early meaning of this term, the actors, be not as the actors, as those whose sincerity is questionable, as those who assume a part, and become so well trained in the assumption of that part that unless you are an expert in character study or an adept in reading the hearts of men, and, of course, this can be predicated of no one save God, you will be deceived time and again. It is important that actors should be able to control their facial expressions for the countenance betrays truly or falsely the intents and purposes of the heart. There are hypocrites, actors, who believe fasting to assert itself in a "sad countenance." To bring about this result they disfigure their faces, that they may be seen of men to fast. Jesus would say this is not fasting. This is not a meritorious deed. This is an act which, played upon the stage of life, receives its reward in the playing and its condemnation from Him who can distinguish between the mask and the countenance. Having thus interpreted for us the hollowness and the lack of reality in much that we term fasting, Jesus proceeds to show us what He means by fasting. "When thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face, that thou be not seen of men to fast, but of thy Father who is in secret; and thy Father, who seeth in secret, shall recompense thee."

It has been suggested that the anointing of the head and the washing of the face alluded to are the acts which preceded the feast, and there is in this thought an intimation of the close relationship between the feast and the fast in the Kingdom of God. However, it seems better to interpret the anointing of the head and the washing of the face as the insistence upon the daily ablution in which the true Israelite as over against the false

Israelite engaged. The fast is to be a service. As such it is not to interfere with the laws of hygiene. Cleanliness and godliness are ever to be associated. The unkempt appearance of the hair, the abstinence from customs which common sense and decency prescribe, these are not acceptable tokens of religion as so many holy men of the east seemed to think and continue to think to this day. Our Christianity has taught the value and the importance of restraint. They who mourn are not to mourn, as they that have no hope. They that fast are not to accept the false standards which paganism would have them continue. They that are steeped in the thoughts of Christ are to move among men as they who are interested in men. The sacrifice of Christ was for men, not for personal satisfaction. Fasting and sacrifice, these two factors are to be associated. Sacrifice is most complete and most real when entirely forgetful of self it seeks to do the thing that must be done at whatever the cost may be. Thus the contemplation of the sacrifice of Christ for us naturally calls forth on our part the most intense sympathy, which means the most intense engagement in His suffering and the most earnest, heartfelt prayer that we may be found worthy to share His agony. In no way can the spirit of fasting manifest itself more clearly than in our readiness to be cross-bearers, light-bearers, bringers of salvation through Christ to the men and women for whom He died. Hence our season must be spent in prayer. It must be spent in prayer that we ourselves may appropriate the full meaning of His sacrifice and then naturally in prayer for all sorts and conditions of men, prayer of the most intense nature because of our growing realization of the importance of prayer. Prayer such as this has, as we have seen in the consideration of the transfiguration narrative a few weeks ago, an effect upon the whole person which is mirrored in the countenance. Hence the coun-

tenance of the Christian during this season will not be sad, nor disfigured, but earnest, intense, spiritual because He has communed with God and has had a vision of the needs of the Kingdom and the grace of God in making him a sharer in the administration of that kingdom.

There is a second commandment concerning the proper celebration of this season. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal; for where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also." This is an insistence upon the principle that no man can serve two masters, that we cannot serve God and mammon. Of course, you will assert that this is one of the maxims of the kingdom which is not to be interpreted of any one season, but rather of them all, and yet is it not true that in order to enforce a maxim it is necessary to begin its enforcement at some time, at some specific time? Now, there is no time in all the year when the glaring contrast between the service of mammon and that of God stands out more prominently. Jesus, despised, rejected of men, with no place where to lay His head, with nothing He could call His own is the giver of life to all the world because He was able to withstand the temptation in which a temporal kingdom was offered Him in exchange for the eternal. Moth and rust, the destroyers of oriental possessions, are emblems of the various agencies constantly at work undermining the activity of men, making it impossible for men ever to feel certain in the possession of earthly acquirements. Thus the most material gain of tomorrow is the golden fleece which eludes the grasp of him who wishes to continue to possess it. Thieves, digging through, breaking through, vaulting over, reaching us

in many ways, take the things we have thought to be the objects of our highest pursuit from us and we stand with nothing to show for a life that has been almost spent. You see the force of the negation and of the command. Do not, and begin at this time, when your thoughts naturally center in Christ, do not lay up treasures upon earth. Do not set your hearts upon the trifles and vanities of a day. Do lay up for yourselves imperishable treasures in heaven and thus co-ordinate the whole life, thus bring it to that perfection which demands the unity of heart and treasure. A very practical test of our willingness to obey this command has from the earliest times been insisted upon, the desire to manifest our fast in the communication of our earthly gifts to the causes of the kingdom. Our willingness to part from things we cherish here and now is an indication of our willingness to accept the treasures of heaven.

Our celebration of Lent so often amounts to very little because we outline too large and too imposing a program of outward observances which push the significance of the season into the background. May we not urge the observance of two things, emphasized in these two commandments, a fast which asserts itself in prayer and an activity which asserts itself in giving.

XXI.

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

MATTHEW 4: 1.

"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil."

In order that the plan and purpose of God may be carried out, there must be perfect submission to His plan, a perfect agreement with His purpose, consequently unqualified, absolute obedience. Paul had fully mastered this thought when he wrote of Jesus in addressing the Philippians, "Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied Himself taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, yea, the death of the cross." It was this perfect obedience which Jesus had in mind as an essential fulfilment of the Father's will when, of His own volition, He went to the shores of the Jordan to seek out John to be baptized of Him. It was to test this obedience that, after His baptism, before entering upon the most active ministry in which anyone ever engaged, He was led of the Spirit not to Galilee with its many personal associations, nor even to the Holy City and the Temple, but into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

As at the very beginning of his active life our first parent is tempted in a beautiful garden which, by his fall, he has converted into a wilderness, the Redeemer of the world must prove His ability at the very outset of

His ministry and His passion to vanquish the lord of the wilderness. The Spirit, in taking Jesus by the hand and thus leading Him away from the haunts of men would say to Him: 'The task before you is greater than any ever undertaken. It is because You and You only, being one with God, fully understand the Father's will that You have been commissioned for the performance of the work of the world's redemption. It is essential at the very outset to think carefully and prayerfully of your Father's plan. You must ever have this plan before you. The cost involved in its execution must be measured. There is no way in which the world may be so sure of Your ability to emerge the victor in the strife than by a trial of Your resolution right now. Ever bear in mind the subtlety of the enemy of mankind, and release man from this pernicious deathly hold.'

Though there is no detailed record of the manner in which the forty days in the wilderness were spent, it is certainly not presuming too much to say that the period was one of watchful, searching, earnest, meditative prayer; not the lip language, nor the artificial stammering we sometimes call prayer, not the critical dissection, nor the superficial nibbling we sometimes call meditation, but communion with God of a most intense character and an earnest, consistent, fulsome thinking-through of God's program. The narrative in Mark is much simpler and much more condensed than is that of Matthew. Mark says that Jesus "was in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan." Matthew tells us that after Jesus had fasted for forty days and forty nights the tempter came to Him. There is no contradiction in this statement. There is no doubt that the entire period of forty days and nights was a season of temptation, just as there is no doubt that specific temptations, enumerated by two of the evangelists formed the climax of the crisis. This wilderness scene is but preliminary

to the garden scene, the prayer in the wilderness that God's will be done is re-echoed in the garden as the cup which has been hovering over Him many times forty days and nights is given to Him to drink. The forty days spent in prayer and meditation are days of continuous fighting in a conquest that involves the mastery of the world. Two personal factors, both of them mentioned in the first verse, are brought to our attention in a careful study of the temptation of Jesus. These two are the Spirit and the devil. Let us read the verse again: "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil."

A moment's thought will lead us to see that temptations encountered without the aid of the Spirit will invariably result in a victory for Satan, whereas temptations encountered under the influence of the Holy Spirit just as invariably result in the conquest of Satan. And whether or not we shall lose or win the battle we are waging will depend upon whether or not we shall enter the fray under the guidance of Satan or of the Holy Spirit. We can rest assured of two things. Satan is stronger than we are. The Holy Spirit is stronger than Satan. May we not then consider the three temptations enumerated from the standpoint of the relationship we shall sustain toward them as we are influenced more strongly by either the Spirit or by Satan?

Matthew tells us that the forty days having been completed "the tempter came and said unto Him, If thou art the Son of God, command that these stones become bread. But Jesus answered and said, It is written man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." The lowest form of temptation is invariably the temptation that appeals to the body. We have all heard the story recited by school-children for generations of the woman who was accused of stealing and who was acquitted by the judge

on the plea that she stole to satisfy her children's need. They had no bread. They needed it and, not knowing how else to supply it, this woman took it in a moment of despair. The story is pathetic and presents the temptation in its most refined form, but though it is pathetic, it is ethically and spiritually unsound. The tempter knew how to persuade this poor woman to sin and she sinned. The temptation that affects the body is the temptation round about us continually. It is the temptation that primarily environed and enslaved Israel in Egypt. The murmuring of Israel while on the march through the desert for the flesh-pots of Egypt indicates that Israel has not yet learned that man does not live by bread alone. Jesus has this incident in mind as Satan approaches Him. It was God who fed His people in the desert and God has ever been the same very present help in time of trouble. Such is the argument of Satan. Jesus has gone farther in His study of God's plan and Word than Satan. He recalls the gracious dealings of God not only in giving bread, but especially also in withholding it as He calls to Satan's mind the word of Scripture: "And thou shalt remember all the way which Jehovah thy God hath led thee these forty years in the wilderness, that He might humble thee, to prove thee, to know what was in thy heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or not. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know, that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by everything that proceedeth out of the mouth of Jehovah doth man live." The mastery of this principle is of exceeding importance because Satan is daily trying to tempt each and every one of us in this carnal manner. How many of us listen and yield as he speaks of the bread which forms one of the necessities of life! We must have it and in the plausible language

of some of Satan's most pliable tools "it is the duty of the world to supply it." To those who have sufficient bread, of course, some further bodily temptation must be presented. And in order to realize his low purpose, Satan has keenly and shrewdly evolved a system of caste as binding and as hard in Christian lands as in heathen countries. Having worked out his system, he whispers to men and women: there is no reason why you should not become members of another caste and in thus cajoling he appreciates the hunger for just this sort of thing among those whom he is approaching. He would supplement the legitimate and necessary unfolding of man's life by artificial means and thus fasten his fangs securely into the flesh of those who yield to his ways. But even gilded halls lose their allurements as time goes on. There must be diversion within these halls and more than diversion, and so he prompts to a life whose end is the destruction of the sanctity of our bodies as temples of God. Need we enumerate the temptations he has in reserve? Paul has done it for us, and he has told us that these are the things that war against the spirit. There you have it! The leading must be that of the devil or of the Spirit. How shall we be able to resist the pleadings of the evil one as he comes to us, endeavoring to take us at a disadvantage as he offers us sufficient bread for the journey of life. There is no way of resisting these temptations, absolutely no way upon earth, save as the Holy Spirit fills our hearts and becomes to us an abiding presence. Ruling in our lives He will transform these lives so thoroughly we shall no longer pine for the fleshpots of Egypt, but will care to live only in and through and unto Him who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

The temptation that will seduce one person may have absolutely no effect upon another. This has made it necessary for Satan to be inventive, to present the allurements of the city to some and of the desert to others.

Jesus cannot be led into temptation when alone. And is that not a wonderful test? Satan has been caught napping. He has forgotten that the true child of God is never alone, even in the desert. Having failed in this first encounter, he does not relinquish his hold, but takes Him into the holy city and places Him on the pinnacle of the temple and says unto Him: "If thou art the Son of God, cast thyself down; for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee; and, on their hands they shall bear Thee up lest haply Thou dash Thy foot against a stone." Again the appeal to Jesus is an appeal to His Sonship. "If Thou art the Son of God"—what a challenge! What a challenge to one who is about to assert His Father's will and to do that will. And again, you will note the subtlety of Satan. Christ has placed Himself firmly upon the "it is written" of Scripture. That is to be His norm through life. Satan accepts the challenge and proves that he, too, knows Scripture, at least, its letter. As the first temptation was one that affected the body, the second is to affect the mind, that citadel of human longing and aspiration. Satan was not in this instance appealing to the vanity of Christ, as so many would have us to believe. He was entirely too shrewd for that. He was appealing to a passion within Christ to be acknowledged as God's ambassador and thereby to be permitted to begin promptly and effectively the work for which He had been sent to the world. Did not Satan even then know of the latent ability of Christ to perform miracles, and did not he misjudge the use to which that power would be put, as he thought of this power from his own standpoint rather than from God's standpoint? The quotation from the ninety-first Psalm applied by Satan not to the believer as such, but to the Son of God as such, certainly does not deny this interpretation. It speaks of guardianship, and implies power. It is Jesus who is to initiate the action and the angels

are to serve Him. It is Jesus who is to act and God is to confirm the action. The miraculous, which is to form such a prominent phase of Christ's activity, is to begin here and now in the Holy City, within the confines of the temple, before an assembled host of worshippers. Jesus, again quoting from the book of Deuteronomy, saith unto him: "Again it is written, Thou shalt not make trial of the Lord thy God." Jesus once more has been victorious, the same Jesus who was led by the Spirit into the wilderness was accompanied by the Spirit from the wilderness to the Holy City.

There are many men and women in our day who seem to be unaffected by temptations which beset the body, but are very much affected by temptation which touches the mind. Satan offered to Christ the exercise of the power of achievement, a power very much sought after today, sometimes rightly, but many times wrongly. Christ believed in achievement, but only when His hour had come and only when achievement implied the glory of God and the well-being of man. The distinction between His mind and our mind is patent. Are there not men and women among us who are constantly trying the Lord our God by endeavoring to measure mind with mind, finite mind and infinite mind being weighed in the same balance? We cannot say that the first temptation and its consideration refers especially to the industrial classes and the second to the professional classes, our individual constitution is too involved for that, but there is a wonderful survey of the present-day outlook and problem in these temptations. And just as the first temptation can only be resisted as the Spirit is present and assists us, the second requires an equally large measure of help and guidance from on High. We are naturally amazed at the infinitude of a mind that can grasp and comprehend the sum total of the problems of the human mind and, with Paul, we cry out as we have

come to a partial realization of the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God: "How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past tracing out." Had Jesus yielded to the second temptation of Satan He would ever after have been Satan's inferior.

There is to be a final test. The temptation hurled at the body has been resisted. The temptation hurled at the mind has been resisted. Is there nothing else in this person that may be vulnerable? And Satan thinks of Jesus' soul. Of course, if he had conquered His body he would likewise have conquered His soul. And if he had conquered His mind he would also have been victor over His soul, but he has thus far endeavored to conceal his real purpose. He cannot continue this particular series of temptations indefinitely, hence he hurls his attack directly against the object of his attack, the soul of Jesus. "Again, the devil taketh Him unto an exceeding high mountain and showeth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and he said unto Him, all these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me."

The brazenness of the demand startles us. Undoubtedly if we could be made to realize that every temptation is neither more nor less than a deliberate effort on the part of Satan to subject the soul to his dominion we should pray more fervently than we do "lead us not into temptation." It is very clear that Satan meant that Jesus was to recognize his superiority and his right to bestow gifts upon Him in return for devotion and homage. Jesus was to subject Himself completely to Satan. He was to recognize a lordship other than of His Father. In ordering Satan away, Jesus proves that He at least understood the implications of the homage which Satan demanded as once more He quotes the Word of God: "It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." This

third temptation teaches us that there is no such thing as a trial of but part of a man or woman in Christian life. The whole man is always involved and the whole man will ultimately gain the victory or be defeated according to the relationship he sustains to the Spirit. In quite another sense than Satan had either anticipated or desired the prophetic word of the ninety-first Psalm was fulfilled when Satan, having been expelled from the presence of the Lord, angels came and ministered unto Jesus.

It may sound paradoxical, but it is true that the presence and leading of the Holy Spirit in our temptations places a restraint upon us. Christ was held back, held back from converting the stones into bread, held back from letting Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, held back from ascribing homage to Satan. This does not negate the power of personal resistance. He was not a tool in the hands of the Spirit with no power of His own. It means that His human nature was trained in the school of the divine, just as our human nature is to be trained through its dependence on His Word and its faith in His Person.

Christ's emergence from the wilderness as the victor over Satan even ere His public ministry has begun is a pledge to us that He is what Satan termed Him hypothetically—the Son of God.

XXII.

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

MATTHEW 15:24.

"I was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

Jesus left the borders of the lake of Gennesaret to escape the cold, carping, unsympathetic criticism of the traditionalist leaders of Judaism, who avowedly preferred the letter to the spirit and their own traditions to the commandments of God given by Moses. You will remember that the embassy of Pharisees and Scribes sent from Jerusalem to intercept Him had found Christ at Gennesaret and straightway put to Him the question which was to cause Him much discomfiture: "Why do Thy disciples transgress the traditions of the elders, for they wash not their hands before they eat bread?" Think of a body of learned men, or supposedly learned men, think of a body of religious leaders sending all the way from Jerusalem to the lake of Galilee for an answer to such a puerile question. As a matter of fact, the legalistic party among the Jews had taken it upon itself to change an original commandment which was intended for the priests into a tradition applied to all persons. The tradition supplanting the commandment made the commandment void. Jesus needed not to have retired in the face of such criticism. He answered it effectively by pointing out the false pretence, the hypocrisy underlying the acceptance of tradition involving the sacrifice of the original commandment. In effect He said: It was God Who decreed that we shall honor our fathers and our mothers, and that he that speaketh evil of father or

mother shall die. But ye say whosoever shall say to his father or mother that wherewith thou mightest have been profited by me is given to God is exempt from this very commandment. If this is a fair illustration of your traditionalism in its working out is not your traditionalism to be condemned? Proceeding to answer the question they have put, Jesus tells them that real defilement is not caused by what entereth the mouth, but by what proceedeth from the mouth, hence has its origin in the very innermost recesses of the sentient, thinking, moral or immoral, spiritual or unspiritual man.

Imagine a great soul battling with the problem of life and eternity on behalf of others, earnestly striving to actualize the weal of every living being, attempting by thought and speech, by example and act to illustrate the way of salvation brought ever and again face to face with this sort of criticism. It was harrowing in the extreme. It was harrowing because it pointed clearly to His ultimate rejection, harrowing because it brought into prominence the blind leadership of those who endeavored to lead. It was harrowing because it distracted the attention of the disciples from the real issue to trifling irrelevancies. His retreat to the borders of Tyre and Sidon under these circumstances was not strange. He needed to be freed, if but for a moment, as you will realize if you turn to the very next chapter, from the incessant hostile questionings of the Pharisees. He needed a respite in order that He might speak seriously, quietly and effectively to His disciples concerning the mission in which He was already engaged and in which they were to engage. He needed to teach them and the world the real reason for the Incarnation, that for all time the world might know why He had come, for whom and to whom He had come.

The encounter with the Canaanitish woman at this point, upon the very borderline of the Jewish and Gentile

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world was not by chance. The lessons involved in that incident are not to be placed on a par with the traditions of the elders, but belong to the enunciation by Christ of the truths of eternal life. What a contrast between the proud, assertive leaders of the chosen people when they have just left behind because they dared not enter even upon the borderline of heathendom, and this meek, humble, penitent, contrite Greek-speaking descendant of the old inhabitants of Syro-Phoenicia, whose name, according to the Clementine Homilies, was Justa and her daughter's name Bernice. This woman has heard of the advent of the Son of David. She seeks and finds Him. She has no question of casuistry with which to approach Him. She comes with a real need to one who, in her judgment and because of her faith in Him, can meet that need. She importunes: "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David, my daughter is grievously vexed with a demon." The cry of the woman is oppressive. The silence of Christ is equally oppressive. The disciples beg of Him to "send her away for she crieth after us." Jesus turns to them, not to the woman, and says: "I was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Undaunted by the remark which she very likely overheard, she comes to Him, worships Him and says: "Lord, help me." This time turning to her Jesus says: "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs." Even yet undaunted she replies: "Yea Lord, for even the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." She has won the day. Her faith has won the day. She receives the assurance she craved, "O woman, great is thy faith; be it done unto thee even as thou wilt." And the evangelist adds: "And her daughter was healed from that hour."

The lesson which Jesus would teach may be approached from one of several angles. We have chosen to approach

it from the angle injected by Christ when He said: "I was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." In these words we have a message addressed to the disciples, the Canaanitish woman and to us.

Addressed to the disciples these words are very clearly a rebuke. The silence of Jesus was at all times as significant as His speech or act. His silence was never to be interpreted as either a lack of compassion on the one hand or of comprehension on the other. There was sympathy in His silence. There was intelligent fore-thought in that silence. If only we could emulate Him in that one respect! Silence such as His tokens intelligence not ignorance, the quiet working out of problems, the important accumulation of facts, the laying-up in the storehouse of the mind and heart of treasures which shall nourish and sustain life in great crises. He was working while silent. His disciples could not see the work He was doing. They, too, were working, but their thought and their Master's differed vitally at times. He was thinking out a method whereby He might most effectively help this woman without sacrificing the flow of the channel of grace. They were disturbed in their minds because of the commotion produced by the woman. They realized how easy it would be for Jesus to grant her request. His answer to them clearly indicates that they did not mean Jesus should dismiss her without granting her request. When they said to Him, "Send her away, for she crieth after us," they were adding a thorn to the crown which was even then being woven for His head. No remark could have shown their professionalism more conclusively. Why was Jesus to help this woman? not because she needed help, not because her affliction moved them to compassion, not because of any sympathy for her daughter. There was one reason and only one why in their opinion she should be helped—because it was annoying to have her continue

to cry and thus disturb their peace. Had Jesus yielded to their importunity He would have shared in their thought and would have sacrificed His position as our Master. It was but one of the continued assaults of Satan throughout His earthly life in a supreme effort to dethrone Him. The motive which prompted them was equivalent to the motive which at times prompts us to send a beggar from our door with a few pennies or prompts the dismissal of a great cause from our minds by filling out a paltry check.

In another way was this message addressed to the disciples to be a rebuke. They had come to Him after He had answered the Pharisees at Gennesaret and said to Him: Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended?" How very human this concern of theirs lest those occupying prominent positions be offended. The Pharisees approached Him as the self-designated leaders of the House of Israel. The disciples had covertly at least sided with them. Their Master had gone a bit too far for them in His antagonism. It might be necessary for Him to retract some of the things He said. This was their thought. They could not afford to break completely with the Pharisees, for they were the representatives of God's people. These were undoubtedly the thoughts of His disciples, thoughts that prompt Jesus to say to them: "Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not shall be rooted up. Let them alone; they are blind guides." Still unconvinced by what Jesus has said, they have suddenly been brought to this border-land where the problem of evangelization is to be presented to them in a concrete form such as they have had no opportunity to experience hitherto. A heathen woman seeks to be healed, in the healing of her daughter who is tormented by demons. There could not have been presented a more radical case than this. Demons in heathen lands to be driven from a heathen woman by the Messiah of Israel!

Jesus presents a very real problem to the disciples as He suddenly asks them: Why do you request the healing of this woman, you the friends of the Pharisees, you who are Jews, you who know that my mission is to the lost sheep of the house of Israel? Can you not see how the machinery of their minds was set to work? They had been moving in a certain direction, the direction of a legalistic Judaism. The moment had arrived when it became necessary to reverse the lever and prove to them the disparity between the political parties dominant in Jerusalem and the House of Israel. They were not synonymous. The disciples must be taught the difference between them. The message of Jesus, "I was not sent but to the lost sheep of the House of Israel" addressed to those who had just asked that this woman be heard, her request granted and she be sent away, produced a momentary confusion as they thought as they had never thought before concerning the question of salvation. In their readiness to help were they not antagonizing the Pharisees? In His anwer was Jesus not in apparent agreement with them? You see how enormously important this little jaunt to the seaside and a foreign land becomes to the disciples. As a new world unfolds before us as we visit foreign lands and return with a greater vision, the disciples were apt to remember not so much the contour of the land they visited but the Canaanitish woman who had unconsciously laid before them the problem of the evangelization of the world and forced them to grapple with that problem in such a manner that they were at least somewhat prepared when their Lord later said to them as He left, "Go ye, therefore, into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."

Though the message was primarily addressed to the disciples and corresponded to the commission they received when they were called, it was indirectly addressed

to the Canaanitish woman. Whether or not she heard this particular statement is beside the question. She certainly indicated by her answer to the subsequent statement of the Lord addressed to her that she knew more about the Savior's mission and its beneficiaries than did the disciples. The attitude of Jesus and His words are to be looked upon as a test applied to the faith of the Canaanitish woman. The heroic mould of this Gentile suppliant is well worthy our earnest study. We cannot but admire any person placed in a similarly unfortunate position who has courage enough to fight down pride and the rising sense of shame as it becomes apparent there is but one thing to do to save the soul of a dear one from destruction, namely, to assume the sin and sickness of the sufferer, blazon it forth, if necessary, in the sight and hearing of others with one purpose only, of ridding that life of a cancer that is slowly devouring it. The first glory of the Canaanitish woman manifested itself in the heroism which prompted her approach. She was not prompted by the sense of a last resort as were some others who came to the Lord. She did not agree to try the panacea suggested by another, to retreat after finding that the heralding forth of the shame of her daughter was heard by all ears except those for which it was intended. There was resolution in her determination. There was resolution in her advent. There was the resolution of assurance in her persistency. Her resolution was born of faith. Her second glory, or was it not a prior glory, consisted in the fact that she did not come to Jesus as a stranger. It is true she was a heathen. It is true she was not outwardly a member of the chosen race, but it is equally true that she lived on the borderline and that her outlook was not narrow. She had taken advantage of her opportunities to associate with the children of Israel to ask them somewhat about their religion and their Messiah. Her very approach, her very

address indicates this familiarity: "O Lord, thou Son of David." These are not words she has learned by rote and is repeating mechanically. They are words born of her faith in Him whom she has already learned to know. Her third glory is her willingness to abide by the plan of Jesus. Was it or was it not proper that Jesus should have come as He did, a Jew, endeavoring to establish the Kingdom of God through His own people? That is the question we would have asked. It is the one question the Canaanitish woman does not ask. She knows very well there must be a well-defined channel for grace as there is a channel for sin. She knows that someone must be responsible, that someone must assume the burden, and if there is any glory, of course, it is right and proper for those who assume the burden to share in the glory. There must be concentration in this work of Jesus. It will not do to Christianize a single individual in each race. The revelation of the old covenant has come to and through Israel. Israel must willingly or unwillingly assume its obligation and its prerogative. The Messiah is the Messiah of Israel first, afterward He is the Messiah of and for the world. Israel must, through Paul and Peter and John and others, preach Christ to both Jew and gentile. The Canaanitish woman does not question this. We do, we who seek Christ anywhere and everywhere except here in this church, we who have not fully realized the importance, the sacredness of our fellowship in His church. The fourth glory is her willingness to abide by the classification of Christ. It was common to speak of the heathen as dogs. The term has lost its harshness on the lips of Jesus, who uses the diminutive appellation applied ordinarily to the little dogs permitted to share the luxury of their masters. The woman has caught the distinction. She pins down the Savior, as it were, to His own statement, reminding Him of the natural order of things and the reasonable

expectation of the little dogs as they await the bits which they know they will receive. The test has achieved its purpose. The heroic faith of this woman has conquered the Master whom Satan could not conquer. "Her daughter was healed from that hour."

The question naturally arises, was this the turning point in the program of Christ? Did He suddenly abandon His plan on beholding the faith of the gentile petitioner and henceforth look upon His mission as changed in character and purpose? Did He suddenly relinquish the thought which He had endeavored so earnestly to impress upon the disciples? The subsequent narrative of His earthly life makes it imperative to answer by means of a negative. He did continue to prove His mission to the lost sheep of the House of Israel. If this be so, then you are justified in asking, was not the Canaanitish woman one of the lost sheep of the House of Israel? Yes, in the same sense in which we are lost sheep of the House of Israel. The House of Israel! Mark the distinction which Jesus draws between Jewish descent and Israelitic descent. They pride themselves upon their lineal descent from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Jesus points out to the leaders of His day that theirs is not to be reckoned a prestige of flesh, of lineal descent, of social rank. Their heritage is spiritual, the faith of Abraham, not the person of Abraham, the victory of Israel, not the remembrance of Jacob.

Is it not pertinent and important to allude in conclusion to the incident which gave to an individual and through him to an entire people a new name? the meaning of which is the key to the statement of Christ in our text. Do you remember the scene which took place by the ford of the Jabbok as Jacob wrestled with the angel of the Lord? Do you remember the unwillingness of Jacob to permit the withdrawal of him with whom he was wrestling until he had exacted a blessing from him?

Do you remember the resultant blessing? "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for thou hast striven with God and with men, and hast prevailed." Israel means "he who striveth with God" in the sense of winning a victory. Let me ask you was the woman of whom we have been speaking a lost sheep of the House of Israel or was she not? Did she not strive with God in the person of the Son? Did she not prevail? Were the statement and the act of Christ contradictory? Let me ask you have you ever striven with God in this way? Have you ever forced Him to say yes to the request that the demons be driven from your life? Have you ever experienced the heroic sense of victorious power spoken of by John: "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

XXIII.

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

LUKE 11:15.

"Some of them said, by Beelzebub the prince of the demons casteth he out demons."

The phlegmatic, weak, non-assertive individual, satisfied with things as they are, unable or unwilling to see them in more ideal relationships, has little to fear in pursuing the journey of life. As far as he is concerned, the victory of faith has been achieved without his intervention. As far as he is concerned, national problems have been evolved to such an extent they do not demand any interference or co-operation on his part. The social questions of the day are being determined by persons who are interested in them and that relieves him of responsibility in this sphere. And so every large question is confronted with the sort of good will which wishes it well, but asks it to go ahead without troubling him and thus diverting the easy flow of his life. On the other hand, the active, strong-minded, powerfully willed, assertive individual, not satisfied with things as they are, but viewing them in their more ideal and possible relationship, is confronted at every turn with obstacles placed in his way by those whose traditions are being destroyed, whose livelihood is endangered and whose ease is jeopardized.

The battles for reform in civic life, for betterment in social life, for brotherliness in human intercourse, for the highest achievable standards in our national life, and for the supremacy of the true faith have ever been rendered most terrible and sanguinary, not because of the

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open hostility encountered on an open battlefield, but because of the secret intrigue of spies, whose sphere is that of prowling in the dark, of seeking to detect a vulnerable spot and of endeavoring to strike a fatal blow. We are not led to believe that Jesus Christ encountered any opposition during the formative period of His life. His advent upon the scene was welcomed and it was only when the subtle teachers of Israel discovered that His synagogue teaching and His public preaching, His active ministry in healing the sick and raising the dead was a ministry and a teaching and preaching with power such as they themselves did not possess that they began to question that power and to endanger that life. Christ would never have been antagonized by the scribes and pharisees and the rulers of the people if He had not begun a campaign in which the assertion of power was manifest. The very patent assertion of power immediately made it incumbent upon his critics and opponents to discover its secret. As long as they were unable to fathom its source, just so long they would be absolutely helpless in resisting its wonderful impact. They must know its secret in order either to launch their attacks directly against the source or to invent a plausible theory with which to counteract His claims. Why did they seek to ascertain the secret of His power? not that they might prove to be scientists, not that they might know, not that they might be believers, not that their faith in Him might be strengthened, not that they might add to the store of honest opinions cherished by themselves or others, but rather that they might put down a person whose honest leadership they were unwilling to follow and whose unique and terrible sacrifice they were unable to appreciate. The gospel lesson for this day lays bare the intrigue, the wicked thoughts, the maliciousness, the hostility which drove Jesus to the Cross. His crucifixion is planned with deliberate forethought, with stoical re-

sourcefulness, with satanic spirit. And nowhere does the deliberate attempt to vilify Him appear more flagrant than in the accusation which insists that He drives out demons by the prince of the demons.

It may be well for us to attempt to follow them a bit in their dastardly effort to fasten upon Him a motive for His action. It is not a matter of conjecture, but of gospel record that the friends of Jesus, unable to follow His thought or action to a proper conclusion, attributed His conduct to a state of mental disturbance. We read in Mark "And he cometh into a house. And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. And when his friends heard it, they went out to lay hold on Him; for they said He is beside Himself." You will at once recall that Jesus was not alone among the children of the kingdom against whom an accusation such as this was made. Festus said to Paul at a subsequent time: "Much learning doth make thee mad." But we must continue to read the narrative of Mark, which speaks of the fear of his friends. It was really this attitude of theirs which encouraged the scribes on coming down from Jerusalem to say with a semblance of authority: "He hath Beelzebub" and "By the prince of the demons casteth He out the demons." Thus the primary enemies of Jesus were they of His own household. An attempt to analyze the accusation in the light of the irrefutable logic of Jesus will be both interesting and instructive.

Beelzebub or Beelzebul, variously defined, is before and above all else the god of idolatry; as such he was looked upon by the children of Israel as the worst foe of their nation. If there was any one thing which God loathed above another it was idolatry, and if there was any one thing which Israel had struggled heroically to overcome it was idolatry. Time and again there had been deflections from the worship of the one true God, perhaps

the most heinous and glaring of them all, the worship of the golden calf as Moses, their leader, was communing with God upon the mount. But Israel had endeavored to rid itself of this sin and had been at least measurably successful through the efforts of these very leaders of the people who are now accusing Christ of being an emissary of this god of idolatry. Their insistence upon this one evil had completely shut their eyes to the existence of many other sins which rendered the observance of this one law of worship null and void. To return to the charge: "By Beelzebub the prince of the demons casteth He out demons." Their charge resolved itself into this: the god of idolatry is the source of the power of Christ. Of course, to believe any such statement it is necessary to deny the validity of the words of Christ. He has repeatedly spoken to His audiences and in private concerning His relationship to the Father and His derivation of power from Him. Now the leaders of the people have seen the signs of Christ. In fact, His signs have called forth their words. They have been compelled to acknowledge the reality of those signs. They acknowledge the signs, but deny the truthfulness of Christ. They voluntarily and repeatedly charge Him with falsehood. We must understand this phase of the situation, and as we do the language of Christ "ye are liars," with emphasis upon the pronoun, becomes a tempered apology rather than an impassioned outburst. Nicodemus acknowledges that if the signs stand the charge falls, for they in themselves prove Him to be a teacher sent from God. Was there not in the very charge an intimation of their belief in the divinity of Christ? Doing the signs He did He was no ordinary mortal. If His authority did not take its rise in God, He must Himself be a god, a false god, according to their reasoning, but nevertheless a god. It is important to bear in mind that even the enemies of Christ realize they

must, in order to satisfy their age, find a source of power in Christ which is distinctly more than and removed from the human side.

It is interesting, in the second place, to consider the application of this power which so disconcerted the leaders of the people. The power of Jesus Christ was applied in order that He might create a new society and His method of creating a new society was to reach the individual and His effort to reach the individual did not concentrate upon any one class, but included all classes. Thus, for instance, He applies that power in calling men away from their nets and their labor that they may follow Him and they obey. The power which the Father gave to the Son is the power of attraction. Men do not shrink from Him. Some of them, no doubt, wished to do so, but they could not. There was something there that held them, something that told them at last a great need in their lives was to be fulfilled. Imagine the power required to draw the impulsive Peter from his leadership to discipleship; imagine the power required to draw the brooding, melancholy, doubting Thomas out of himself, compelling him to think other thoughts than those of despair. Imagine the power required to draw men to Him at night or to attract women whose lives have been pure and women whose lives have not always reflected the highest virtues of womanhood. Imagine the equal power of attracting little children and men whose rigorous, ascetic lives have made them entirely forgetful of the realm of childhood, hence unfit for the Kingdom of God.

This power of attraction asserted itself in the manner in which persons brought to Him their sick. Surely at no time do we reflect greater dependence upon a power not our own than when standing by the bedside of those whom we love. We are willing to sacrifice everything for them, and yet realize how vain this very desire is.

The very discussion concerning the source of Christ's power in which we are engaged was brought on because Jesus was casting out a demon that was dumb. Of course, He was successful in driving out this demon, permitting the man who was afflicted but a moment before to speak, which caused the multitudes to marvel and the leaders to utter various conjectures, all of them attempts to minimize or neutralize the influence of Christ with the multitudes. In the instance before us the inability of the man to speak is directly associated with the possession of a demon or an evil spirit. Imagine, once more, the Savior of men attracted to persons infirm, disabled, diseased, ostracized from society, carrying a demon about with them. The power of Jesus Christ is to be applied to the individual. It is not applied to the individual needing no physician, but to him whose sin is manifest to himself or to others. And it is applied for the purpose of relieving man of this great burden. In no way can Christ render a greater service to you than by driving from your life the evil spirit who is hovering over you, asserting his sway, not necessarily in depriving you of speech, but perhaps in having taken from you something pertaining to the invisible realm, something belonging to your spiritual life. The "Lord have mercy upon us" rendered as often as we assemble for our morning worship must be converted into a very personal "Lord have mercy upon me" ere I can say "Lord have mercy upon us". For there is dwelling in me an evil spirit who cannot be exorcised by professional exorcists of the Jewish or Christian Science or any other type, but only by Christ.

In speaking of the secret of Christ's power, it is essential to distinguish between the power of Christ and that of Satan, for it is important that we should know something of this difference.

The scribes would associate the power of Christ with that of Beelzebub. Christ says to them they are mis-

taken in this premise. Beelzebub is no separate god, no demon working individually and alone, but Beelzebub is part of the kingdom of darkness. Therefore, Christ is constrained to say in answer to the criticism that by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, he is casting out demons: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth. And if Satan also is divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand, because ye say that by Beelzebub I cast out demons?" In other words, these critics of Jesus were either beating about the bush, realizing the danger of coming out openly in their denunciation of Christ, or they did not realize the mechanism or the power of the satanic realm. Perhaps both these reasons are valid, for they certainly were afraid of the multitudes and they were equally blind to the magnitude of the power of Satan. No one can conceive the greatness of Christ's power who has not followed the reasoning of Christ concerning Satan's power. That Beelzebub, the prince of idolatry, is but one of many princes, all of whom are subordinate to a king whose realm and resources, whose princes and retainers, whose plans and stratagems are beyond the power of the human mind to fathom is the sum and substance of the teaching of Jesus at this point, especially in the parable which He utters to set forth the contrast between the two realms. Jesus would say, you cannot divide the Kingdom of God and you cannot divide the kingdom of Satan. "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth." It is the case of the strong man and the stronger man, the regents in realms which can never be co-ordinated and which cannot indefinitely continue their independent existence in the heart of any man. The unclean spirit who is driven out of man is here sometimes referred to as the spirit of idolatry, which was, as we have seen, driven from Israel by the leaders of the peo-

ple. This spirit going about, unwilling to abide where he cannot do some very vital mischief, and recognizing that nowhere is he more needed by Satan in the conflict of the two kingdoms than in his encounter with those who believe in the true God, goes back, seeking to be reinstated, but he finds there are no sympathies for him, no real desire to accord him a place; there is no possibility of serving his master, Satan, single-handed. Instead of giving up the contest, as he would do, if there were no inter-dependence in Satan's kingdom, he goeth and taketh to him seven other spirits more evil than himself, spirits which Israel does not recognize as the spirits of Satan, pride, injustice, lust, why not endeavor to construct a catalogue for yourself from your knowledge of this kingdom as it is portrayed in Holy Scripture? And thus Christ would say to these opponents as He would be constrained to say to us, there is a power inherent in this kingdom of darkness which is attacking you which is greater than you are, unfathomed by you, untelligible to you, blind leaders of the blind. There is a greater desire on the part of those who serve in the realm of Satan than on the part of those who serve in the realm of God to coordinate forces, to work harmoniously, to wield the engines of destruction in a far more effective manner than is employed by the children of the kingdom in acting as light-bearers. The overwhelming power of Christ is again manifest in its ability to crush Satan single-handed. On the one hand, you have an array of demons, of princes, of Satanic agencies in the spirit world and in the world of human beings, here you have the power of darkness seated in high places; on the other hand, the Son of God entering this world to battle with this great army.

The assertion of Christ's power in His day led to antagonism of the most bitter sort ending in death. Shall His assertion of power over our hearts and lives result in hatred and enmity, in scoffing and revilement, or shall

it result in something other than that? The secret of Christ's power is His divine love. The resultant of that power in our lives must be written in terms of loyalty. The Lenten season, with its story of conflict, of sacrifices, of suffering and of death, is surely a most fitting time in which we shall assert our loyalty anew, our loyalty not to Satan and his kingdom, but our loyalty to the Kingdom of God.

XXIV.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

JOHN 6:26.

"Jesus answered them and said verily, verily I say unto you ye seek me, not because ye saw signs, but because ye ate of the loaves and were filled. Work not for the food which perisheth, but for the food which abideth unto eternal life; which the Son of man shall give unto you."

In the sixth chapter of his gospel John suddenly transports us from Jerusalem where we tarried as we read the fifth chapter to Galilee. We are to assume that practically a year has passed in the interim. The story of the feeding of the five thousand is told by John because he must narrate it in order to make his subsequent report more intelligible, otherwise it is hardly likely that he would have told a story narrated by the other evangelists, at least he is not in the habit of repeating the stories already told by Matthew and Mark and Luke. John tells us that Jesus left the western shore of the lake of Galilee and crossed over to the other side. He did not cross over alone. His disciples went with Him and a great concourse of people who had seen His miracles and were anxious to see more followed after Him. They undoubtedly were a little late in arriving, for when they came to Him Jesus had already ascended the hillside, where He communed with His disciples. In the meantime other bands of pilgrims may have drawn near, for the feast was close at hand and great caravans were beginning to move toward Jerusalem. As these separate bands joined forces in the presence of Jesus it was found there were thousands of people present, five thousand we are told, not

counting the women and the children. Jesus turns to Philip, the prudent, thoughtful, somewhat unbelieving disciple, and asks him how they are to satisfy the need, the temporal need of this great host. Philip at once sets about the task of numbers and informs Jesus that the total amount in the treasury is between thirty and forty dollars, that this amount is scarcely sufficient to buy food for even a very scant meal for five thousand people and the five thousand, of course, do not include the women and the children. Andrew rather adds to the predicament by saying that there is only one lad in sight who has bread and fishes for sale, and his whole store is, of course, too insignificant to merit serious attention. In the face of such reasoning it speaks well for the disciples and better for their Lord that they were willing to do as He bade them and see that the people were seated. The secret of the story, the secret of the miracle lies in the blessing asked by Christ before the distribution of the food. And this leads us to ask, by way of interjection, would not our food go farther, would not our needs be more easily satisfied, would not our lives be richer and happier and better if our prayers were more real? How many blessings of today, repeated at table in a desultory manner, are real blessings? The broken pieces gathered up after the repast are the evidence of the bounty of God, evidences that His baskets are never empty, evidences that there is enough for tomorrow, which may be had for the asking.

The people had come to Jesus because of the signs which He employed in healing their sick. They were again to follow Him and find Him because of this more recent sign in giving them bread. The story is suggestive of a very important lesson of our own day conveyed to us by

The Bread-line of the World.

A few days ago a sight natural to those who live in certain sections of our great city greeted my eyes. At a given signal an army of men seemed to emerge from hidden recesses, the army formed in double file and, in a peaceful, orderly manner, waited for the opening of a door of hope, a door which was to lead them into a sanctuary, and in this sanctuary, while listening to the reading of the Word of God, and the preaching of that Word, this great army was to obtain food for the body as well as for the soul. Perhaps the primary prompting of that body of men was the need for food and the knowledge that in this place they were to obtain it. The words of Jesus, addressed to the multitude which followed Him from the eastern to the western shore of the lake of Tiberias, would undoubtedly apply to this gathering of men as it did to those who heard the original utterance: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye seek me not because ye saw signs, but because ye ate of the loaves and were filled. Work not for the food which perisheth, but for the food which abideth unto eternal life, which the Son of man shall give unto you." The incident just narrated and happening day by day in our city is mentioned first in order that you may realize the similarity of purely human conditions in every age of the world's history.

We might, if we had time, spend the rest of the day in speaking of the bread-line in the history of the world, the bread-line inaugurated in the garden of Eden when, after man's fall, God said to him: "Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in toil shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and

unto dust shalt thou return." We are very apt in our day and generation to speak of man's spiritual status as conditioned very largely by the satisfaction of his temporal needs, but may we never forget that man's temporal needs were primarily the resultant of man's disobedience to God in denying the spiritual needs which were to be the very center of his life. The bread-line of the world and the bread-line of the Kingdom of God are again brought into contrast as "Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain," as Noah "prepared an ark to the saving of his house," as Abraham permitted Lot to wrest from him a fruitful vale. Observe, if you please, the great bread-line, in which are included the sons of Jacob, as it moves from Canaan into Egypt and imploringly seeks to obtain from Pharaoh the bread so much needed to tide over a very grievous famine. Is there not in this incident a blending of temporal and spiritual blessing as the brethren of Joseph are brought to realize their sinfulness and their sole hope of forgiveness in the mercy of the God who has satisfied their temporal needs? Observe, if you please, the great bread-line in the desert, as the children of Israel go out early each morning to gather the manna provided by the God who is leading them. Observe this same people bringing their vessels to the rock which has been smitten and from which flows a stream for the quenching of their thirst. The ability and acumen of the individual Israelite is ever contrasted with the helplessness of the nation and the necessity on the part of God to provide food for a bread-line co-extensive with the bounds of the nation. "As sheep without a shepherd" that well expresses the status of the nation and it is in this condition that Jesus finds them. It is in this condition He sees them wandering somewhat aimlessly through the desert on their way to the Holy City, hoping there to satisfy their hunger and thirst.

Over against this bread line is He Who has no home, no individual purse, no common purse sufficient for the morrow, no hope of ever being ranked with the rich men of His age, and yet able in calm assurance and faith to bid the disciples seat this multitude in order that He may open the doors of His Father's granary and, entering, bring forth a supply abundant for each and every one of them. Think of holding a great line like that in check, think of satisfying the wants of that line, think of constraining the men and women and children gathered there on their way to Jerusalem to turn back again from their course to see a bit more of this King, to enjoy a bit more of His bounty. Friends, as the bread-line continued from the days of our first parents to the days of Jesus, it has continued from His day to our own. The cry of the masses for bread in the streets of ancient Rome is very much akin to the cry of the masses of today in the streets of London and New York and Philadelphia. Thank God that the influence and example of Jesus are manifest in our city and that our people have arisen and are increasingly arising to the need round about them. The need, the temporal need of each person in that great crowd round about Jesus was thought of in Jesus' prayer and answered in the Father's blessing. The temporal needs of all persons in our great city will be met as we discriminatingly, rather than abstractly, pray to the Father and as we each and every one of us seek to make ourselves responsible for the putting upon his or her feet of some one child of God. We are too often interested in a cause instead of being interested in individual souls.

Is it not important that we should turn from the story of the literal feeding of the five thousand to the application of this feeding so explicitly explained in this sixth chapter of the gospel of John? After the satisfaction of the hunger of these many people Jesus withdrew to the hillside alone to engage in prayer. He dismissed His

disciples, for there were moments when even they could not enter into the meaning of Jesus' life. He may have observed their boat putting out as He quietly withdrew into the silent fastness of the hills of God. During the watches of the night the distance between Jesus and the Father was growing less. Early, very early, in the morning He descended from His solitary mount and pursued the boat now almost at the other side of the lake. Silencing their momentary fear, as they believe they are looking upon an apparition, Jesus joins them and goes with them at the hour of prayer on the morrow into the synagogue at Capernaum or a similar house of worship and instruction nearby. There the crowds surge about Him. There He is constrained to declare His consciousness of the reason which has prompted their approach. They have felt no real, inward want to be near Him. And that is the tragedy in the religious experiences of today. In outward life there is a need. "Ye ate of the loaves and were filled" Jesus says to them. People join the great bread-lines of the world because they need bread. We feel the pangs of hunger coming upon us and our dear ones and we endeavor to be up and doing. We are willing and ready to work for food which perisheth because we have need of such food. We recognize the need of water for our parched throats. We recognize the need of new shoes to take the place of the shoes we can no longer wear. We recognize the need of new garments to take the place of those which have been worn threadbare. We recognize the need of a new equipment at home, in the factory, in the workshop, in the office, in the study, to supplant an equipment that is no longer sufficiently modern to meet our needs. We recognize each and every material need that arises in our daily life—and we are blind, absolutely blind to the spiritual needs which transcend the material needs as the heavens transcend the earth. Jesus tells us in this very chapter

that God alone is fully conscious of man's needs. The Father as God, Jesus as God, knows the deepest needs of humanity. Man does not know and cannot know all things. Man moves in the limited world of his own vocation. In being unable to know man must believe, but in order to believe man must come to Christ, and yet the experience of Christ is as true today as it was twenty centuries ago—"ye would not." There is no need to ask God for a home because we have one. There is no need to say grace at table because the larder is full. There is no need to ask for garments because we have them. There is no need to ask for health as we enjoy it, and, furthermore, we are able to employ a physician. There is no need to ask for guidance in our vocational life. We simply fit into a groove which we ourselves have created. There is no need to attend the services of the House of God because we can worship equally well wherever we are. Those in the audience of Jesus are endeavoring to convince Jesus that He is unduly worried about some things. Did not Moses provide manna when manna was needed? That is their reasoning, a reasoning which must be refuted by having them understand it was not Moses but God who gave them the manna, the same God, by the way, who was even now giving them Christ. This utter inability of the contemporaries of Jesus to look out into the unseen world is manifest today. Hence the admonition of Christ "work not for the food which perisheth, but for the food which abideth unto eternal life, which the Son of man shall give unto you" is an admonition addressed to the Christians of today.

The counter-question of the Jews indicates their spirit of mockery. "What workest thou?" Jesus has spoken to them of spiritual work. He has indicated that He is a worker. They are thinking of Him as an itinerant teacher, thinking of Him as a man without a country, thinking of Him as the leader of a band of followers,

thinking of Him as a person endowed with power to such a degree there is no longer any need for the display of effort. They cannot see that Jesus is doing anything which may be termed work. "What workest thou?" you can hear the sneer in their words and you are reminded of these same words addressed to many servants of Jesus Christ. Jesus answers their question by indicating to them that He is the bread of life. Jesus answers their question by setting forth the importance of this other bread-line, consisting of those who are seeking for food which will not perish. They are willing to follow Jesus outwardly if Jesus will declare Himself publicly to be their bread-king, the dispenser of temporal food, the occupant of a temporal throne. It is not difficult for them to fit into a material universe such as that. They have perhaps already chosen the offices they desire to fill in this new realm. The whole thing is tangible. They are anxious to inaugurate the new reign. Their earthly hopes are to be shattered as Jesus speaks to them in language which is mysterious and offensive to them, so offensive that "many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him."

What is it that enables a man without an overcoat to stand for a long time in the dead of winter before a closed door, the hope that that door will eventually be opened and that he will be allowed to enter and that, having entered, he will find within a warm spot where he is allowed to rest, and a warm cup of coffee and a bit of bread. He belongs to the bread-line of the world because he needs bread. He is willing to work for his bread by standing in line and by listening to the service in which he must engage. You and I, whether we care to admit it or not, belong to the spiritual bread-line of the world. We need food and we need Christ as our food. Some of us are unwilling to acknowledge our need. We are wasting the precious moments God has

given us and while we are debating the question others take the places we might have had. We are pushed back farther and farther. Time and again we make up our minds to hold our place in the line. Time and again we emerge from it as others press on. Dear friends, when Jesus said "I am the bread of life," He was saying nothing less and nothing more than that He is God and that as God He is abundantly able to sustain us by imparting Himself to us. The sustenance is for time and eternity. This sustenance by virtue of the sufficiency of this bread is to protect you from your lower satanic desires, from the falsehoods you otherwise would tell, from the carnal desires you otherwise would cherish, from the lack of love you would otherwise display. This sustenance will make it possible for you to bear and forebear and your life thus transformed will be what it is because of your coming to Jesus and because of your faith in Him.

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XXV.

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

JOHN 8: 46.

"Which of you convicteth me of sin? If I say truth, why do ye not believe me?"

The verse chosen as the basis of our meditation this morning is a javelin thrust into the very thick of an encounter between falsehood and truth, false religion and true religion, *life* and *death*. On the one hand we have the forces of truth and life represented by and personified in Christ, on the other the army of sin and death mustered from amongst the very leaders of the people. Christ, the captain of our salvation, has sent His terms of surrender to the camp of the adversary in a message pregnant with love and sympathy, "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life. . . . If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples; and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." Words such as these must have come with startling force and as a very serious shock to men who believed themselves, because of their heritage as the children of Abraham, to be the light of the world, who believed themselves to have been elected as guardians of the truth, hence free. Imagine these leaders of the people suddenly checked in their career, and told in very unequivocal language: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and standeth not in the truth, because there is no truth in him." The difficulty with these leaders of the people was that their program lay buried in the past. Their

plan of action was constructed upon the precepts of the past. Their exemplars were the men of a very distant past. Their program was neither constructive nor progressive. In taking a horoscope of the past they did not observe the important signs of coming events, the foreshadowing of the fulfilment of days, the coming of the Kingdom, the coming of the King. Abraham meant more than Christ to these blind leaders of the blind. They could not see that allegiance to Abraham means also allegiance to Him who said: "Before Abraham was, I am." They were astonished in being told that though they might be the children of Abraham after the flesh, they were not the spiritual children of Abraham because they had neither the faith of Abraham, which asserted itself in his acceptance of God's pledge for the future, nor did they do the works of Abraham.

The exchange of opinions between Jesus and these leaders of the people reveals their real narrowness and the illogical attitude assumed by them. After all, a test may be the proper means of determining the relative value of the assertions of the opponents. Christ decides upon this course of procedure as He asks them: "Which of you convicteth me of sin?" and receiving no answer, He adds: "If I say truth, why do ye not believe me?" The word "convicteth" employed in the revised version is stronger than the word "convinceth" employed in the authorized version. According to human standards, I may never be convinced of my wrongdoing because of stubbornness or narrowness of vision, because I cannot be persuaded to see things as others see them. The Savior, though He is the truth incarnate, does not care to have anyone place Him on this platform, and afterward say: 'The test was unfair. It was but natural that He should not permit Himself to be convinced of wrongdoing.' Christ anticipates such reasoning by boldly asking 'which of you can hold me guilty of wrongdoing by

any demonstrable proof?' In so saying He appeals to reason and forever challenges the many vain appeals of those who are out of sympathy with Christianity to the unreasonableness of our faith. There must be faith and a faith centering in sinless personality is certainly worth something. There is, hence, involved in the two questions of Christ, an apology of Christianity which is remarkably telling. Christ stands squarely for a reasonable faith. As He is life and truth, He would have His followers approximate His state. The leaders whom He is addressing can be exponents of life and truth only as they forsake the darkness which is not consonant with light, their own false teachings which are not in accord with the word in which they must abide.

Sin, according to the interpretation of Jesus, is personal hostility to the will of God. If we accept this definition as our own, two consequences emerge. No human being other than Christ can possibly be said to be without sin and Christ cannot possibly be said to be guilty of sin. If we accept this definition of sin, can we possibly speak of a spring-tide of sin? Was there any particular moment in your mature life when sin was born? Is not the cry of the infant, other than its cry of pain, an utterance of its hostility to the will of the parent? And is not the parent the representative of God for this infant? Hence is not the cry of rebellion against the misunderstood counsels of the parent a cry of rebellion against God? Surely those who have come into contact with infant life must have been amazed at times because of the strong utterances of protest, the bitter struggles, the unwillingness to surrender a desire, all of which clearly point to the presence of sin which is not being slowly evolved in the child, but depends for nourishment on the very life roots.

There is no spring-tide of sin. There was, once upon a time, when the apple, not yet touched, was still hang-

ing upon the tree of the knowledge of good and evil while man, tempted to take it, stood in doubt while listening to the voice of another than God. That was the spring-tide of sin, experienced by our first parents. You and I and all others born into this world since that moment have never beheld the spring-tide of sin. The punishment meted out to the child betrays the fact that we have arrived at sin's summer long ere the summer of life dawns for us.

And what, we ask, are the marks of sin? Is there any way in which we can recognize evil? The skeptic says: "How could our first parents have distinguished good from evil before tasting of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?" Ah, yes, there you have it! Man must know by subjecting everything to test and experiment. The age of authority has not received its first hostile onslaught in our century, but the age of authority received its first wound when man, in his disobedience, denied the sovereignty of God, took of the apple, ate, and his eyes were opened—opened to what? Life and immortality? no; nakedness, sin and death. What are the marks of sin? Disobedience and the spirit of rebellion, cowardice and the spirit of retreat, uncleanness and its artificial resultants, illness and the process of decay, death and eternal lamentation.

But after all, the most harrowing influence of sin is in its inter-relationship with death. When once sin has begun its sway in the system there is absolutely no effective human remedy. It simply precipitates itself from ledge to ledge until it has fallen into the abyss from which it cannot recover itself. Each and every one of us, children of the first Adam, are subject to sin and its consequence—death. In view of the universality of sin and death, is not the challenge of Jesus of Nazareth to convict Him of sin, if that be possible, very astounding? Here are men in whose proximity He lives, men of in-

telligence, men who are very much prejudiced against Him, men who have every facility to investigate His ancestry, His family, His words and His works, and to them the challenge is issued. Their inability to lay the finger upon any direct violation of God's law was not due to reticence or seclusiveness on the part of Him whose whole life was an open book. No man was ever more active than Jesus. He of whom Matthew reports that multitudes brought their sick to Him in the evening, after a full day of toil, He of whom the evangelists report that He could not be hid from the multitudes, He whose preaching was an everyday occurrence, could not very well be accused of hiding His real self from the eyes of others. If ever any man stood subject to the direct rays of a searching criticism, that man was Jesus, and yet He and He alone is able to challenge the world to convict Him of sin, because He and He alone has completely subjected Himself to His Father's will even unto death. Do you imagine that the centuries intervening between the day on which the challenge was uttered and this have been altogether without men whose endeavor it has been to prove the challenge fallacious? And yet Christ asks the question now as He asked it then, "Which of you convicteth me of sin?" And receiving no answer He very properly asks, "If I say truth, why do ye not believe me?"

The life of which this Lenten season testifies is something that does not exist nor can it be had apart from God. And this life in God must be mediated by Christ. What is this life in God through Christ? It is not meat and drink. Christ says distinctly: "The life is more than food." He continues: "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." He thus places the ban upon both the purely physical life as conceived by the Hebrew mind and the economic life of the rulers of the people. In His analysis of the subject, Christ

thus proceeds to a moral consideration and advances beyond that to one that is distinctively spiritual. "He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." According to the teaching of Christ, life is something that begins in Him and endures forever. John puts this concretely in his testimony concerning Christ: "In Him was life." And, having set forth the story of his Master, he concludes the narrative long before he has exhausted the material at his disposal, asserting that "these things are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in His name." How then, we ask, are we made participants of this life which He has so willingly and abundantly communicated to us through His death and resurrection? You remember the story of the prodigal son, the boy who left his father's home, went out into the world, sank lower and lower in the scale of existence, until finally he was an outcast. It was in this condition, however, that the real manhood of the youth conquered. His return was not prompted by pride, for pride would naturally have kept him from returning to be laughed at and insulted by his former friends. A twofold recognition prompted his return; first that life, true life, could be regained and lived only in his father's home and secondly, the fact that this life could be had if he was willing to confess his wrongdoing and desist therefrom. He wished to be reinstated. He desired life rather than the mockery of life to which he was subject. He was man enough to be willing to pay something for it. So he went back, confessed, and ere the confession was ended called forth from the father's lips the song of praise which laid bare the promptings of the father's heart: "My son was dead, but is alive again." How many of us there are who are spiritually dead, who, having once been sons or having believed ourselves to be sons, have gone forth to roam

far from our Father's home, who haven't manhood or womanhood enough to go back again. We are afraid of an elder brother who is certainly very different from the older brother of the prodigal. We might be willing to return to the Father's house, but we are unwilling to surrender to Him who taught us to say "our Father." If sin is to be banished from our lives, we must be willing to believe in Him who is the sinless one. It was He who said: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, He taketh it away; and every branch that beareth fruit, He cleanseth it that it may bear more fruit . . . As the branch can not bear fruit of itself, so neither can ye, except ye abide in me." The whole teaching of the gospel of John revolves about this central idea of life in Christ. It is manifest in the conversations with Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, Pilate and the multitudes. Christ is the way, the truth and the life. He is the bread of life. Christ, not His teachings nor His works, but His very personality is this hidden, mysterious thing called life, hence the necessity of believing on Him, the sinless one, hence the unreasonableness of not believing on Him.

April 10

XXVI.

PALM SUNDAY.

MATTHEW 21:9.

"Hosanna to the Son of David: blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest."

What an unusual sight the city of Jerusalem must have presented at the season of the annual festival of Ingathering or, as it was otherwise known, the feast of booths—booths in every available, normally unoccupied space, in the courts of the temple, round about the temple, even in the streets. As Israel journeyed to the Holy City for the purpose of being present at this festival, which was at once a reminder of God's goodness while His people journeyed from Egypt to the promised land and a reminder of His ever-recurring goodness in providing an abundant harvest, it sang its songs of gratitude, which may be termed songs of ascent as truly as that title is accorded to certain other psalms used on the occasion of another pilgrimage. One of these songs was undoubtedly the 118th Psalm, the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth verses of which are as follows: "Save now, we beseech Thee, O Jehovah; O Jehovah, we beseech Thee, send now prosperity. Blessed be he that cometh in the name of Jehovah; we have blessed you out of the house of Jehovah." Bear in mind, if you please, that Hosanna means "save, we pray Thee," or "save, we beesech Thee," and the cry of the multitude encircling Jesus on His last journey to Jerusalem immediately becomes a paraphrase of these verses of the 118th Psalm, a paraphrase which becomes vibrant with meaning as Israel believes that at last He that cometh

in the name of the Lord has really appeared. And so, going up to Jerusalem to celebrate the passover festival, Israel sings the songs of ascent, then the songs which, though they are designated for other seasons, have, nevertheless, made their impression upon a religious people, and these songs culminate in one song, the one song culminates in one refrain of that one song as the people surrounding Jesus shout rather than sing: "Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; hosanna in the highest." This verse has eaten its way into the lives of Christians who are accustomed to hear it read in the gospel lesson for this day, to hear it paraphrased in the hymns of the day and to take it to heart in the rite of confirmation which is celebrated on this day.

May it not be well to apply this verse to our confirmation today? May it not be helpful to the band of catechumens here assembled to re-live this day in the lives of those of us who have already confessed Christ before men, asking ourselves certain questions which affect our confirmation in the hope that our answers may be helpful to those who are about to confess Christ? And may we not express the earnest prayer that these considerations may start trains of thought and of self-examination in the minds and hearts of those here present who have not yet determined to confess Christ openly before men? What I would have those of you do who have already been confirmed is to attempt to visualize and re-live your confirmation day, no matter whether it was last year or a score of years ago, and I would ask you first of all, was this day in your life the resultant of a mass movement or of individual constraint?

We speak of great movements as if they were the invention of the modern world. We would not classify them thus if we knew a little more about history than we do. There have been great movements in every age of

the world's history, movements whereby men attempted to get away from God and movements whereby they sought to draw nigh. Israel was particularly susceptible to both currents, the currents toward and away from God. For movements away from the living God we need but refer to the frequent attempts at the introduction of idolatry among the people. For movements toward the God Whom they so often forsook we need but point to the repeated rallying under successive leaders of prophetic calling and instinct. The great movements toward God and the Messiah culminated in a common impulse which prompted the multitudes to follow Jesus and acclaim Him the true Son of David and the blessed of the Lord. These are the same great caravans journeying to Jerusalem that have been diverted from their pilgrimage on this and former occasions as they have tarried in the desert to be fed by Christ or by the lakeside or on the hillside to be taught by Him, or in the villages and towns to see the miracles which He wrought upon their sick. They do not so much as stop to assert an individual impulse, they are carried down the maelstrom of restless, expectant, eager, searching mass movements. It is largely in this spirit they have come to the outskirts of Jerusalem on their annual pilgrimage. It is in this spirit they encircle the Christ. It is in this spirit they unitedly, not singly, shout: "Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; hosanna in the highest." You could not possibly imagine this verse utilized as a recitative or an aria for a single voice. It is the mass utterance of the same concourse of people which a little later shouts in just as lusty a fashion: "Crucify Him, crucify Him." A public confession such as that in which a group of young people are to join this morning, such as that in which many of us have joined on a previous Palm Sunday, can be, and

there is danger, that it will be just such a mass confession.

A public confession to mean anything at all signifies that the individual dare not be lost in the mass, but the individual must be active and vibrant in and through the mass and the mass must be transformed because of the presence of the individual who takes himself or herself seriously. The best illustration of a public confession which came as the resultant of individual constraint is, to my mind, the little incident which occurred at Bethany just six days before the passover. When it was known that Jesus had arrived a group of villagers prepared a public supper for Him. Of course, they were His friends, but they could not have realized how little their supper must have meant to Jesus at that time. Undoubtedly it meant more to them than to Him. They could not understand the loneliness of Jesus. There was one who could and did understand that loneliness, that burden, that sorrow that was weighing Him down and fitting Him for the Gethsemane struggle. There was one who was willing to confess her faith in Him and her love for Him in a truly sacrificial way. There was one who, though she knew that her act must bring strong rebuke from her kinsmen, was willing to suffer rebuke for His sake. There was one whom individual constraint prompted to confess Jesus as her Savior in the anointing of His body against the day of His burial. It was a public confession in the presence of many witnesses and was understood by Him Who called for and needed just some such sign of discipleship at that moment. The confession cost Mary a very great deal, not only because of the depletion of her purse. That must have meant something to her. It cost her more because of the rebuke and the ridicule which she anticipated. In reading the gospels we are surprised to find that public confessions of an individual character of real worth are so few.

Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathaea and others confessed their faith in Christ, but not publicly, hence not whole-heartedly. The precrucifixion confessions of Peter were the confessions of a self-appointed leader, on the one hand, and of a man who, in inspired moments, spoke better than he knew how, on the other hand. They were not the deliberate confessions of one who has unconditionally found Christ. How much did your confession of Jesus Christ on the day of your confirmation mean to you? Was it a sing-song recital of something you had learned by rote, or was it the outburst of convictions pent up within your heart? Were your thoughts centered upon mere externalities of place or person, or were you alone with the Christ even though others were there?

The first question which we have asked and which we must ask you individually to answer is: Was your confession of Jesus Christ on the day of your confirmation a mass confession, a class confession, or was it an individual confession in the presence of many witnesses? Your answer to this question will depend upon your answer to the second question. Had you mastered the meaning of the act in which you engaged? Did your confirmation mean something more than an external act because you had caught the purpose of Christ's coming into the world and of His coming to you? This leads, very naturally, to an interpretation of the confession itself. Hosanna is a prayer for safety, a prayer for salvation. There is implied the need for salvation, a need which, according to the 118th Psalm, from which this prayer is taken, can be satisfied only by the Lord. "Save now" was the cry of the multitudes from Galilee and the approaching multitudes from Jerusalem. Was the prayer addressed to Jehovah in the interests of Him Who was riding on in majesty to His last and fiercest strife, or was it addressed to the Son of David Himself? In either case

it announced the need of salvation and set forth the approach of this day of salvation. In either case Israel looked upon the Christ about to enter the Holy City as the Messiah, even though a little later it was to repudiate its confession. They who had witnessed the raising up of Lazarus could not refrain from honest appreciation of His personality and of His claim. Our confession on this day of confirmation is couched in a more specific formula than that of the 118th Psalm. Of course, we include that, but in our recitation of the Apostles Creed as we have perhaps never recited it before, we pause for a moment before each of the great milestones of religion and we ask ourselves, Do I really believe that, or are we here because we have paused before these milestones as we have proceeded on our journey? It is because they have become very real to us, one after the other of these articles of the creed, one after the other of these interpretations of the articles of the creed as we have interpreted them, it is because we are able with our whole heart to make this confession our own that our confirmation really means something to us. The hymn "Abide with me, fast falls the even tide" means less to the person who sings it occasionally at an evening service than it does to the person who has been permitted to repeat it at the death bed of a member of the family. The gospel of Jesus Christ means more to me because of the confession of its saving value by a group of poor lepers slowly decaying in body whom it was my privilege to visit in company with some missionaries. There must be a vital relationship between confession and creed. My confession must be the honest expression of my creed. I cannot believe one thing in my heart and say something else with my lips. Now, as a matter of fact, the public confession is not always a clear, cleancut expression of the inmost beliefs of our hearts. There are those who have no clear, clean-cut beliefs. There are

those who believe in the validity of mental reservations. There are those who believe in the validity of moral reservations. There are those who believe in the validity of spiritual reservations. There are those who come to Him without any reservations, but ask Him to take up His abode within their hearts. The last named are true catechumens. Did you or did you not come in this spirit? Are you the catechumens of today coming in this spirit?

The hosanna of the advent season is a prophetic hosanna, pointing to a Messiah Who is still to come. The hosanna of Palm Sunday is a gospel hosanna, the proclamation of the arrival of One Who is ready and willing to be your Savior. During the week that begins today we are not so much to center our thoughts upon Him Who is to come to judge the quick and the dead, but rather upon Him Who has come and Who has suffered and died for us. In view of the Deed of Christ, in full realization of the atonement which He has wrought for us, the question is asked shall we or shall we not join in this public yet very personal confession of allegiance to Him about Whose person and purpose there is no question? Our hosanna is not sung as we wend our way with the multitudes to the city in which Christ is to die, but our hosanna is sung because we have seen Him die for us. We no longer merely hope that He might have been the One to redeem Israel, but we know that He is the One Who has redeemed us. Our hosanna is the hosanna of faith, but it is the hosanna of experience as well. Our hosanna is the hosanna of child-like trust on the part of those who have mastered the first rudiments of religion and are ready to enter upon the joys of their Lord as well as upon His sorrows.

XXVII.

HOLY THURSDAY.

MATTHEW 26: 40.

"Could ye not watch with me one hour"?

In the transition of a soul from this world to the world beyond there are normally two struggles, the conflict of soul ere it is at rest and at peace, and the struggle of the body. The violence of the physical struggle is dependent very largely upon the manner in which the soul struggle has spent itself. If there has been little or no willingness to subordinate the personal will to the will of God, then, of course, the great and final struggle must be purely physical. If, on the other hand, the soul struggle has convinced us of the necessity of subordinating self to God, the physical struggle is a mere aftermath in which resignation makes possible a peaceful exit from the life that now is to the life to come. The struggle of the individual passing through this unique yet universal experience must or should be shared by those who are next of kin or by those whose friendship supercedes the position of kinship. They who have watched by the bedside of a parent or child whose life was slowly ebbing away, know what is meant. As you analyze your feelings you realize that during those trying moments you have passed through two very different frames of mind. In the first place, there was the soul struggle which endeavored to avert the calamity. You prayed that the cup might pass from you and your dear one. It took some time until you were ready and willing to commit the soul of your parent or your child or your friend into

the keeping of your Father, until, in other words, you were ready to say "not my will but Thine be done." After that came the subsidence of the storm, the physical ebbing out of the breath of human life and that was peaceful compared with the struggle of soul which preceded it.

Perhaps all that has been said thus far ought to have been said in conclusion as the resultant desire to imitate the example of our blessed Lord and Master and yet it has been said at the very start so that we may realize, those of us who are so prone to ignore the practical application of the Savior's sufferings to our own sufferings, the practical postulates in every act of the passion of Christ. The intensity of the struggle in the days preceding the crucifixion centered in the scene in the garden of Gethsemane because it, above all things else, became the real, culminating soul struggle which made possible the subsequent physical conflict. Jesus was justified in asking His disciples to share His agony. Perhaps their wakefulness in the garden would not have changed things and there would have been no outward turning of the tide in Jesus' favor because of it, but on the other hand it would have meant so much to Jesus to have known at that moment of the hearty sympathy of those whom He loved so tenderly.

May I ask you to follow that little band of disciples and their Master as they leave the upper room in which they have just finished the last supper and where they have joined in the singing of one of the inspiring and comforting Songs of the Hebrew Psalter, as they wend their way out of the gate, down into the valley of the brook Kedron and ascend the slopes of the Mount of Olives to the garden which was so well known to them as one of the retreats to which they resorted on the way to or from Bethany. On this particular evening they stopped, as was their custom at the garden of Geth-

semane, but the Master was the only one in that party Who realized that they would not eventually proceed to Bethany, their usual shelter for the night. To them, their evening pilgrimage presented little that was unusual. Jesus realized its unique significance. His thoughts were centered on the events of the morrow. The time for instruction had passed, the time for a supreme soul struggle had arrived. This explains the two relays of disciples, the first group stationed near the garden gate, the second group nearer the Lord, yet removed a bit from the scene of His conflict.

The appeal of Christ as they face the tragedy before them is wonderfully pathetic. We have already indicated the method of their adjournment after the evening spent in that upper room. As they arise from the table ready to go out into the darkness of the night Jesus says: "All ye shall be offended in me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am raised up, I will go before you into Galilee." This statement demands no answer. It is a prophetic setting forth of facts which will transpire in the immediate future. We are therefore very much annoyed because of the persistent way in which Peter intrudes upon the sacredness and solemnity of the hour in asserting one of his boastful commonplaces: "If all shall be offended in Thee, I will never be offended." The rebuke of Jesus, a further prophetic statement of fact, remains unheeded by the disciple who does not take time to meditate upon its significance but blurts out "Even if I must die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee." In this verdict, Peter becomes the spokesman for the entire band "likewise also said all the disciples." It was natural for Jesus to ask the great majority of the disciples to wait for Him at the entrance to the garden. In moments of great soul struggle we must be alone with God. It is inter-

esting to note that as He leaves them He does not ask them to share His burden, whereas He does ask certain things of the little group of three which accompanies Him into the confines of the garden. He has borne up wonderfully to this point. He now begins to be sorrowful and sore troubled. As they arrive at a strategic point He endeavors to have them understand a bit of His anguish as He says: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: abide ye here, and watch with me." We can watch with others even though we are not within a line of vision. The request is not unreasonable. Relatives and friends do it day after day as they remain near at hand while surgeons and physicians and nurses, and shall we not say pastors, are in the sick room. Relatives and friends do it day after day in this season of world conflict as they alternate between prayer and the scanning of the casualty lists. Jesus was justified, amply justified, in the request He made. He was facing a death of shame. He was facing a period in which He, the sole sinless one in all this world, would be misunderstood by all the world. He needed the sympathy and the love of His disciples, of James and of Peter and of John.

His disappointment on returning from that first conflict is keen and bitter. His faith is not shattered, His faith in the ability of His disciples to resist temptation. Note the change in His appeal. He no longer asks them to watch with Him. They have shown their inability to do that. What He does ask of them is that they watch and pray for their own souls, lest they fall into temptation, adding the very significant maxim "the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." He has learned that He cannot depend upon human aid in this crisis.

There is in the admission of the disciples the admission of all the world that it cannot by its own power or strength come to or believe in our Lord or remain in

fellowship with Him. He found them asleep. May not this judgment be pronounced upon Adam and Eve in the moment of their temptation in the garden; upon Noah as "he drank the wine and was drunken"; upon Abraham in moments of forgetfulness recorded in Scripture; upon Lot, the sordid, base nephew of a great uncle; upon Isaac and Jacob, upon the Judges and Kings and Priests, upon prophets and disciples, upon exalted church fathers and haughty world rulers? May not this judgment be pronounced upon you and me even here and now? Three times in succession our Lord finds His disciples asleep. The deliberateness with which they thus acknowledge their inability and their lack of desire to stand by Christ in His hour of extreme need and peril must have added an hundred fold to the intensity of Christ's suffering. When Peter put the question to the Lord concerning the frequency with which a brother must be forgiven he did not think of himself as the brother who must be forgiven for a volley of transgressions in a single night which almost equalled the succession of the shots from a modern machine gun. And isn't it so in our own lives? Take the sins to which you are most addicted and see how frequent is their repetition even after the Lord has come and taken us by the hand. Perhaps it is the un-Christian attitude of nagging others, the lack of sympathy for members of our own family, the inability, because of the degeneracy of our ears, our heart and our tongue, of reproducing reports correctly, the proneness to accept rather than to give, to steal in a gentlemanly way, to waste our lives and our substance in riotous living, all of which sins and all other sins are the direct result of our unbelief in Christ. We too are causing Him even today to tread the wine-press alone by our repeated sleeping at the post of duty, by our lack of vigilance when viligance is most needed. If a commanding officer is permitted, in the interests of his

army and his country, to order a man to be shot for sleeping at his post in hours of peril, what punishment ought to be meted out to the soldier in the army of Christ who brings peril to countless souls by falling asleep while on duty? Might not the disciples have intercepted the plotting and scheming and planning of Judas if they had before this fateful evening endeavored with all their souls to learn to know both Christ and Judas? Had they not voluntarily sacrificed golden opportunities never to be regained?

Friends, the hour in our lives during which Christ asks us to watch with Him is not so much the hour of baptism or of confirmation, or of the Sunday service; these hours are important, but the hour which Jesus asks us to watch with Him is the hour in which Satan draws nearest to us, the hour of darkness, the hour in which restraint is removed, the hour during which we are away from home and friends, the hour of greatest peril. On the other hand, the hour of greatest peril to us is the hour of most intense intercession on His part. This negative, destructive hour in our lives has a positive constructive value only as we are able to watch and pray because we know that our redemption draweth nigh.

XXVIII.

GOOD FRIDAY.

JOHN 19: 30.

"It is finished."

Good Friday has come upon us unaware. It is always so. The greatest tragedies heralded though they may have been for years dawn upon an unexpectant, unbelieving world. The sunset and the evening star appear long before we are ready for either. As we parted last evening we saw the hostile band lead the Savior away into the darkness of the night. It is unnecessary to repeat the indignities to which they subjected the Lamb of God. It is unnecessary to refer to the patient passion of the greatest, noblest prisoner ever brought before a human tribunal. We do not care to rehearse this morning the detailed action of this day. It is too harrowing, too shameful, too incredible. Our attention is to be fastened upon one of the ever memorable words from the cross, the sixth: "It is finished."

What did they who stood near enough to hear this outcry make of it? How did they interpret it? If they thought of it in any intelligible way they very likely thought of it as a word referring to the agony upon the cross, the physical suffering to which the Savior was subjected. They did not for a moment realize that they were listening to one of the greatest words ever uttered, a word the significance of which cannot be fathomed even by those of us who have assembled twenty centuries after the deed and have had the opportunity of examining a countless host of witnesses from the days

of Calvary to our modern days of world tragedy. May we pause for a moment to realize that the word which Jesus uttered when He said: "It is finished" is absolutely unique in the history of the world. World conquerors like Alexander and Caesar and Napoleon have uttered the word in one form or other, and yet we know how hollow was the ring of the word as it left their lips and how untrue it was subsequent ages have abundantly shown. No world conqueror ever completely finished the world's work in such a way that his successors could reap the fruits of his conquests. No world conqueror ever will or ever shall finish the world's work. There will always be something to do, something that has been left unfinished, sometimes that has been marred rather than made, consequently something that must be undone. No world conqueror has ever yet been able to look into the future as he uttered his cry of triumph. It has always been a testimony to past achievements and a false testimony at that.

But you will answer, the realm of the Christ is the spiritual realm. His victory, His achievement, must be different from that of the world conqueror. Yes, what you say is true. Jesus Himself said: "My Kingdom is not of this world." Turning to the spiritual realm we find the utterance of Jesus, this outcry of His upon the cross, to be absolutely unique even there. The various outcries of Moses, the first as he seeks to evade the task which God imposes, those which give vent to his feelings concerning the inabilty of Israel to enter upon the promised inheritance, his outcries against friend and foe alike, all of them are the bitter wails of one who recognizes his own insufficiency and that of his own people. The work of Moses was not finished. Israel had not entered fully upon its heritage. Israel had not learned to submit to the Mosaic covenant. Joshua was needed to complete the work of Moses and others were

needed in turn to complete the work of Joshua. The spiritual realm of Israel is the realm of which the prophets were the mouthpieces of Jehovah and yet not one of them stands out as the beginner and finisher or as the finisher of Israel's spiritual combat and the solver of Israel's problems. We are simply trying to remind you of the impossibility of thinking of this exclamation as the honest valedictory of any one other than Jesus. The words on other lips, proceeding from other hearts, are untrue and hollow. The words uttered by the Christ are true. The thought which gave rise to these words was no sudden thought, flashing through the mind of Christ and as suddenly finding expression. The preceding word "I thirst" was uttered only after Jesus knew that all things were finished. Until He knew that and was sure of it He had no inclination to satisfy His thirst. After the consciousness of a completed task and a completed passion had manifested itself to Him He was ready to quench the thirst which might and would have interfered with the calm transit of the soul from this world to another realm. "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up his spirit." What was it that was finished? Are we to interpret these words only of the personal suffering of Jesus? I do not think so. There are those who would interpret them of both His suffering and His work. If that suffering is not to be looked upon as mere personal pain, but as a passion, a suffering made more intense because of its extensive reaches, its necessary inclusion of all the pain of all the world, then we are willing to agree with this verdict. When Jesus said: "It is finished" He was certainly not thinking of Himself even if He had been conscious of treading the winepress alone. When He said: "It is finished" He was thinking of the business which had been entrusted to Him, His Father's business. He knew as no one else knew the significance of the

tearing of the temple veil. He knew as no one else knew the distinction between the old covenant, forever abrogated from that moment of His death, and the new covenant instituted by His death upon the cross. He knew how much this supreme sacrifice would mean for humanity. He knew that at last the fulness of time had come and that the Scriptures had been fulfilled. The prophecy which had been heralded by His forerunners had found its fulfilment in Him and in that yielding of self to death upon the cross. "It is finished" refers primarily to the work of redemption.

For whom was this great cry of victory intended? It is exceedingly difficult to limit the word to any one circle of hearers. In the first place Jesus must have uttered the word as a monologue. He Who had repeatedly spoken of the judgment which is to be meted out in that great day, He Who had so often urged men to work while it is day, reminding them of the night wherein no man can work, He Who had recognized the close of day in His earthly life, certainly could not refrain from subjecting His own life, His own deeds, His one great deed to a critical self-examination. It is the human Jesus and the divine Jesus, the Jesus Who is the son of Mary and the Jesus Who is the son of God, rendering an account to the eternal Logos, the eternal Word. We cannot render an account to ourselves in the sense in which Jesus did. The message contained in this sixth word from the cross was not simply an outburst of assurance which came as the resultant of self-examination. It was a message intended for the Father. He was entitled to know the result of this one great supreme effort to reach humanity and bring it into touch with heaven. The message was to find its way into the unseen world. It was to bring joy and happiness to the God Who is love and Who as love sent forth His only-begotten Son into the world. It sounds anomalous, does

it not, to speak of the joy afforded the Father in hearing the "it is finished" of the Son. It sounds awkward and cold to speak of the happiness of the Father at the moment of the death of the Son, but it rings true to spiritual experience, this joy of the Father in the salvation of countless souls. Some of the most exalted hymns in our Christian hymnody, some of the hymns which have most adequately portrayed the life eternal with all its joys and all its happiness have been penned in moments of persecution and distress and famine and pestilence. Some of the most beautiful transitions of human souls have been those in which there has been no question of the presence of the light of eternity. The Son teaches us how to die. The Father teaches us how to act in the presence of death.

The audience in the unseen world includes those who encircle the throne. We cannot think of the angels as messengers to whom have been entrusted repeated embassies in the interests of the Christ, without thinking of them and their interest in this moment of blended darkness and light. An angel was sent to strengthen Christ in the garden of Gethsemane. We are not told that any angel was sent to sustain Christ upon the cross. That would not have been treading the winepress alone. We cannot for that reason, however, think of the angels as impassive to all that was transpiring. It is not easy to stand back and look on when you feel that perhaps you might be able to be of some help. How gratifying, therefore, this message of Him Who is their Lord and Whom they have not been permitted to serve at this juncture, this assurance that without their aid "it is finished." As we think of the effect of these words in the unseen world we think naturally of those whose graves were opened, of those whose hope was to find its fulfilment. Turning from the sympathetic throng in that unseen world to the great army at enmity with God

we realize what a challege Christ's message must have contained for them. The Paradise which was lost through the disobedience of our first parents was converted into a harvest field for Satan and his army. Suddenly the tables were again turned and Paradise lost became Paradise regained. An army which had been trained to act constantly and consistently on the offensive found itself suddenly on the defensive, its power gone and its retreat begun. It is for us, Christians of today, to continue the offensive begun by Christ.

The message was intended not only for the unseen world, it was intended for this world in which we live. It was intended for the high priest, a high priest no longer, but the lowest of all priests. It was intended for the Sanhedrin, no longer the religious citadel of the people of God, the Holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, was soon to be that. This word was intended for the masses which had cried "Hosanna to the son of David" and a few days later "crucify Him, crucify Him," a word of warning and a word of invitation. The word was addressed to the soldiers at the foot of the cross. It was addressed to Pontius Pilate and his wife. It was spoken to the women who remained true to their Lord during His last hours upon the cross. It was addressed to the disciples who had failed to watch with Him even for a single hour. It contained a special appeal for Peter and for Thomas. It was one of those laconic messages which eat their way into the highways and byways of this world forcing people to take heed. It is a message which today is challenging attention as never before. People are asking themselves "is it finished" this work of Christ, and many of them answer "no, it cannot be finished or we would not be experiencing the scenes we are made to witness today." As this answer comes to us, worming its way into our thinking, we are permitted again on this day to hear His insistent reply

"it is finished." As we are forced to pay attention to the devilishness of the intrigue which has converted our nineteenth century civilization and Christianity into twentieth century barbarity and lack of religion we are told by the men at the front themselves that there is but one hope for this world and that hope is the cross of Christ. They are praying today and as we turn to the last of the collects in the litany of intercession which has been prepared for them and is being used by them we pray with them as we recognize the significance of this day and its message:

"Eternal Father, Who in the sending of Thy Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, didst speak peace to the world, and in the blood of His cross hast opened the way to all mankind to find peace with and in Thee: Hold Thou the cross high that every eye may see, fire every heart with Thy Spirit that all may accept in Christ the way of life, that following His holy example and burning with His zeal of service, all mankind may be one brotherhood in Him, and Thy peace possess every heart and rule all the nations of the world through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen."

XXIX.

EASTER DAY.

MARK 16:6.

"He is risen; He is not here."

It was an ideal day, that Easter day years ago on which parents and children attended service together in God's House and then quietly but joyfully wended their way to a delightful forest within walking distance of the town and reveled in the happiness of Easter-tide. A member of the family, sent in advance, selected the place, secreted nests of wholesome Easter-eggs in secluded spots of undergrowth or in the branches of a tree, and on the arrival of the party directed the whole-hearted search on the part of the children, with an occasional word of advice and a constant "not here," "not there," until the object of the quest had been attained.

There was just a bit of instruction added concerning the symbolism of the act. The egg itself, the symbol of life hidden away in the secluded nest, must be sought diligently, but is at last found perhaps where we least expected to find it, just as the women did not find the Savior where they looked for Him at first. Would that we could re-live these happy days! Can we not re-live them if we so choose? Would that we could again hear the good old Easter message as we once heard it! Can we not thus hear it if we choose? In terming the Easter message, the most important message ever delivered to men, are we not a bit archaic? Are not the messages which are being exchanged between various governments at this moment more important? It seems incredible, does it not, that people should even dare raise such a

question. The various vital problems with which we are concerned today will undoubtedly affect the weal or woe of individuals and of nations for many years to come, but the one greatest message ever delivered to men by the mouth of the angel will continue to affect the weal or woe of every individual for all eternity. Paul states the issue concisely and strongly "Now if Christ is preached that he hath been raised from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, neither hath Christ been raised; and if Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain, your faith also is vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God: because we witnessed of God that He raised up Christ, whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, neither hath Christ been raised; and if Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also that are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If we have only hoped in Christ in this life, we are of all men most pitiable."

We reassert the statement, the message of Almighty God delivered by the mouth of His holy angel to the women and by them to the disciples and by them to other disciples and so on down the ages to the present time is the one great message of the ages and of eternity for man redeemed, restored, reclaimed. This announcement has been and is being delivered today to very different groups of people and is producing very varied results. We have chosen but a few words conveying a decided shock to the women who first heard them. "He is not here" is a message addressed to those who sincerely but mistakenly seek Christ where He is not to be found.

What a long Sabbath it must have been for the women, especially for that tried band of faithful helpers in His work, as they awaited the passing of the hours until their

law would permit them to perform a last loving service to His body in seeking by means of spices to preserve it from decay. At the first possible moment "very early on the first day of the week they come to the tomb when the sun was risen." There behind the big stone which mortals believed to be a door that could not be opened from within, at least, and, as a matter of fact, it was sealed to make it secure from without, behind that door and in the recesses of that rock-hewn grave they expected to find the body of their Lord, hoping fully to see Him again in the resurrection of the dead but not in this life. John says of Peter and Mary Magdalene and that other disciple who was no other than himself "As yet they knew not the Scripture that he must rise again from the dead." They had heard it, of course. They had heard it from the lips of Jesus Himself, this great truth, but they had not appropriated it. It had never penetrated beneath the surface of their shallow comprehension. Peter and John must be told "He is not here." To this day people are seeking the Christ in tombs of a Judaean wilderness rather than by the charming lake of sun-lit Galilee. To this day the words of Christ Himself are true: "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is the Christ, or here; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. Behold, I have told you beforehand. If, therefore, they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the wilderness; go not forth: Behold, he is in the inner chambers, believe it not. For as the lightning cometh forth from the east and is seen even unto the west, so shall be the coming of the Son of man." As Christians we must pity and pray for those who have not yet found the living Christ and who, in their impetuous zeal, rush with Peter from place to place in their restless quest for Him Who is not as far removed from them as they

imagine. But perhaps our prayers ought to be expended upon ourselves first of all. Perhaps the Christ has been buried by us in the tomb of a fleshly heart where, of course, He cannot tarry, from which, consequently, He must flee or be driven out.

The angel's message is addressed to those who shun the Christ as well. How do you suppose Pilate felt on hearing the news of the empty tomb? The angel would say to Pilate: "He is not here" where you have permitted the body of Him Whom you ordered crucified to be laid and Pilate is years older as he hears the news.

The leaders of the Sanhedrin are informed that the very thing they have sought to prevent has been accomplished. The tomb is empty in spite of a seal, in spite of Roman guards, in spite of every precaution which their cunning was able to devise. The angel would say to the members of the Sanhedrin assembled on the morning of the day after the Sabbath: "He is not here" and he accompanies each of these dignified hypocrites to a vantage point sufficiently near to, yet sufficiently far from the tomb as he whispers in the hope of persuading one or the other "He is not here." Nicodemus and Joseph, and let us hope others, too, are persuaded, that the angel's message concerns them.

The camp of Roman soldiers from whose midst a detachment has gone forth and into whose midst a detachment has just returned is astir. The angel's message has been relayed throughout the camp, "He is not here" and the centurion and others immediately correct a former verdict. Instead of saying "Truly this was the Son of God," the centurion is heard to exclaim, "Truly this is the Son of God."

The day's work is ended in the palace of Caiaphas. The court is again astir with a retinue of servants. They had heard the angel's message, "He is not here," and they recognize that perhaps their jeers, their insults, their

cruelty may have been unjustifiable. The angel's message spreads throughout the city of Jerusalem. It spreads throughout the regions of Galilee. It is spoken of in Samaria and in Peraea, in fact, wherever the Christ was known while upon earth, people are discussing often behind closed doors and with bated breath this strange evangel "He is not here."

The empty tomb becomes one of the most forcible preachers of all times as the angel's voice echoes and re-echoes from out its depth "He is not here." The Christian church is being mustered even now. Even before the festival of Whitsuntide those who were enemies of the Cross of Christ are receiving their marching orders and are enlisting as they who have been won by the empty tomb.

Can we gainsay the import of this message to those who, in our own day and generation, seek to point us to false Christs?

If the angel of the Lord were to come to our city on this Easter morn, if, because of his inability to find the hospitable home of a believing Abraham, he would be compelled to seek quarters in one of our modern hostelries, if assigned to a table at which no blessing is asked, to a room adjoining the apartments of those engaged in revelry, to a place in the lobby through which swarming hosts of automobilists pass on pleasure bent, surely he would be compelled to exclaim, "He is not here."

If the angel of the Lord were to visit the institutions of learning in our midst, if he were to pass from one department to another, from one class-room to another, from one laboratory to another, from one library to another, from one student's den to another, how often would he be compelled to admit "He is not here." If the angel of the Lord were to visit our workshops, active day and night, every day and every night, if he were to stop to speak to those who, because of the din of the

machinery, could not hear his voice, he would be compelled to admit "He is not here."

Turning to the present-day scene of destruction and from there to the homes of the instigators of the terrible holacaust which is devastating the world, the angel would be compelled to admit "He is not here."

What a difference there is between the original intent of the announcement and its subsequent application. The angel's function was to announce the resurrection and consequently the absence of the body of Christ from its rock-hewn tomb. The original intent was to set forth the impotence of the material earth in its desire to absorb and disintegrate the body of Christ. "He is not here" was not spoken originally of the hearts of men, but of the heart of the material universe conceived apart from its Creator. "He is not here" is God's challenge to materialism and to those who have made materialism their creed. "He is not here" is God's solace and hope to those who have been weighed down by the whisperings of an unbelieving world. "He is not here" is God's choicest bit of gospel for all His children, not here in a body subject to corruption, not here as a memory, not here as a faded flower or a withered leaf, but here as a risen Christ.

"He is risen; He is not here," the two statements are akin and supplementary. "He is risen" was uttered first because it is of primary importance. "He is not here" was a mere supplementary statement. It so happened that the fundamental message could not be adequately appreciated or understood until the second statement had eaten its way into the consciousness of the women and the disciples. They believed Jesus to be dead when He was not dead, just as truly as we sometimes believe that we are possessors of the risen Christ when we are far removed from any such vital touch with Him. The message must be announced to us as it was announced to the

women. Our thought process on receiving the message must be that of the women. We must first rid ourselves of the conception that Christ is here, part and parcel of our lives, if it be true that the Christ Whom we ought to follow is not the Christ Whom we have followed. After thinking that He has been within our hearts all this time there must come the rude awakening to the fact that, after all, He is not there. When that fact dawns upon us, then we shall set forth in our quest for Him and He will reveal Himself to us as He is, our risen Lord and Master. "He is risen" means that the Christ Who is our Christ is our Lord and our God, Who, because of His victory over death and grave, is entitled to that supreme place in our hearts and lives which He and He alone is entitled to occupy.

May I ask you what are and where are the spiritual springs to which you go for draughts of water that ought to be living water? May I ask you where is your Bible? May I ask you how often is it taken from the table upon which it lies? May I ask you whether or not you have a Common Service Book at home and whether or not you know how to use it? May I ask you what your church means to you? May I ask you what your fellowship with your brethren in the faith means to you? Would or would not the angel of the Lord, if he were to ask these questions, be compelled to write on your record card "He is not here?"

May we, in closing, turn for a moment to the record of the resurrection preserved by Luke in which he quotes the angel's message as it has been transmitted to him. "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here but is risen; remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying that the Son of man must be delivered up into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and the third day rise again. And they remembered his words."

Dear friends, the great pity is not that the heathen will not be adequately represented on the day of judgment, but the tragedy of this and every Easter celebration is that the angel must be sent into Christian lands and Christian churches and Christian homes with the message "He is not here." May we, in this morning hour, call to memory the first Easter day. May we recognize that the Lord was present on that day and may it be said of us and of our service, though He is risen, He is here.

XXX.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

JOHN 20:28.

"My Lord and My God."

Action and reaction, the two follow each other as night follows day, as darkness follows light. Man's disobedience is sin, the first reaction against God's holy purposes. God's willingness to cope with man's sin in sending His Son into the world is a subsequent example of divine action. Surely there can be and will be no further illustration of reaction from so holy a love and so unexampled a gift, and yet we are mistaken. The glorious announcement of Easter day is not to be accepted unchallenged. The message of the angel "Be not amazed; ye seek Jesus, the Nazarene, who hath been crucified; he is risen; he is not here; behold, the place where they laid him! But go, tell his disciples and Peter, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him, as he said unto you," is not to wait for a twentieth century challenge, but is challenged by a disciple of the Lord immediately upon his reception of the report that the Lord is risen. Have you ever thought of the manner in which God always anticipates the difficulties and questionings of men? Last Sunday every heart was attuned to the gospel for the day. We all felt the tenseness of the situation. We had heard so much of the bitter sufferings of Jesus and of His cruel death we were prepared and keyed for the angel's announcement. We needed it to fill the very great want which the proclamation of Jesus' passion had enkindled.

Then we went to our homes and during the week relaxed a bit until today the result of this relaxation is evident in the absence of a number of followers of the apostle whose questionings and whose ultimate confession need to be considered most especially by the very individuals who have absented themselves from the services of this day. The reaction from the unalloyed joy of Easter day is bound to come. The question which this day's gospel raises is: Shall there be an action to follow close upon the reaction that has set in, or shall we follow the example of Judas? It is either despair or victory. The question as to which it shall be depends upon whether or not we shall appropriate to ourselves the story of Christ's death without fathoming as well the significance of His resurrection. It was only by a painful process that Thomas advanced from the former to the latter attitude, and it is this process we are to study this morning for the benefit of any among us who may have had the same misgivings which Thomas experienced before he arrived at the biggest conclusion of his life. The fact of Christ's resurrection must not be studied as we would study a bit of history in school. It must not be to us something that is entirely outside ourselves. The fact of Christ's resurrection must be to me the very center of my religious thought. It must be such an integral part of my personality that, with Job, I shall simply be forced to exclaim: "I know that my redeemer liveth." To thwart any possible reaction the Christians of the first century extended their Easter celebration to this day, and on this day the newly confirmed members of the church received their first communion. On this day the service of the early church was begun with the Introit: "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word." Can there be a more urgent appeal addressed to all those who, because of the experiences of this season, are newborn? This then is to be our greeting this

morning: as those who are newly born, may you each and every one desire the sincere milk of the Word. May you each and every one appropriate to yourselves this greatest of all the facts of the ages just as naturally and as sincerely as the child receives and appropriates to its use the gifts which loving parents bestow upon it. May the Word of God be both food and drink to those who cannot get along without it. The arrival of Thomas at the stature of Christian manhood was only achieved by a slow and tortuous process. He has been bitterly attacked for his doubt by some and has been as warmly defended for his persistency by others. I am inclined to feel that, though Jesus rebukes his unbelief, nevertheless the story is preserved by John for the encouragement, rather than the estrangement of those who find themselves in equal predicaments. May God help them to be equally persistent, equally honest and ultimately equally victorious. The expression "my Lord and my God" has frequently been interpreted as a spontaneous outburst on the part of one as suddenly converted as was the apostle Paul. Nothing could be further from the truth. There was nothing spontaneous about the confession. It was but the audible confession which came naturally as the result of a long-continued, earnest yearning. No one can question and no one has questioned the honesty of Thomas. His disposition made it very difficult and trying for him to fit in with his new environment. The very fact that John is the only one of the recorders of the gospel narrative who has thought it worth while to let us see the workings of the mind of Thomas is noteworthy. John could not have stressed the incidents concerning Thomas which he has noted if John had not approached the problems of Thomas in a sympathetic frame of mind. It is important for us, therefore, to remember that the confession which later arose to the lips of Thomas expressed itself first of all in his life as an earnest yearning, an earnest desire.

In so far he was infinitely ahead of some so-called Christians who have taken and are taking their Christianity in a very matter-of-fact way and he was infinitely removed from that large class of doubters which has experienced no such desire and whose only purpose seems to be to refute the statements of the Word of God.

Thomas was not alone among the disciples. He is the most conspicuous example of a tendency rather than the sole representative of doubt. We must bear in mind that, though the Lord has repeatedly indicated to His disciples that He would arise from the dead, they did not comprehend His statements. More than that, they made absolutely no effort to understand His utterances on this subject. The one or two seeming attempts to grasp His message are undoubtedly to be interpreted as the efforts of men out of sympathy with the inner life of the Master. They doubted the literalness of His statements. They doubted the assertion that He would rise from the dead. Their doubt was unbelief. Mark distinctly informs us that Jesus afterward appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen. Thomas was, therefore, not alone in his unbelief. The band, of which but one remained true to his Lord during His passion, was infected with hardness of heart. This coldness on the part of His disciples was undoubtedly one of the greatest trials Jesus had to bear. Thomas is certainly superior to the majority of the disciples. Though honestly doubting many of the statements made by his Master, he endeavored to approach every question openly. The earnest yearning of his heart to accommodate himself to Christ and to follow Him is nowhere more apparent than in the incident recorded in the eleventh chapter of the gospel according to John. Lazarus of Bethany was sick unto death when his sisters sent word to Jesus asking

Him to come and heal their brother. Lazarus had died before Jesus started upon the journey. Jesus knew that he had died before He set forth with His disciples for Bethany. He knew and His disciples knew of the danger involved in leaving Peraea and going back to Judaea where the Jews were on the lookout for Him. When He told the disciples of His decision to return to Judaea they held a little conference, and it was Thomas who expressed his willingness to return with Christ, though he believed the only outcome of the trip would be the death of Christ and their own death as well. To quote his own words: "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." There was no sneer in these words, no desire to attempt to dissuade the disciples from their undertaking, no flinching. He, more than they, had thought through the problem and he, more than they, was willing to assume the consequences of his decision. There was enough love in his heart for Jesus to desire to follow Christ even into death though he might, of course, have turned from the enterprise and might have forsaken the band if he had been convinced of the folly of the undertaking. His very statement, his calm decision, these indicate the pull of Jesus' personality and the impossibility of letting go.

In varying degrees this pull of Jesus' personality has made itself felt in all lives that have seriously and conscientiously approached His life. The pull has not been equally strong in all lives. It has not been strong enough in the lives of some who have deliberately sought to resist it, but even they have yielded more than they care to admit.

The earnest yearning of the disciple manifests itself in his admission of the unfathomableness of the plan of Jesus or the purpose of Jesus. When in the wonderful last discourses of Jesus with His disciples the Master has said to them: "And whither I go ye know, and the

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way ye know," it was Thomas who said: "Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?" These words gain in importance as we remember they were not uttered by the thoughtless Peter, but by the thoughtful Thomas. And now Jesus had been crucified. Thomas may have witnessed the crucifixion. He had very likely heard of the report of the women concerning the empty grave during the day of the resurrection. If so, we do not know why he did not attend the meeting of the disciples on the evening of that day. It was because of his hesitancy to be present, because of the fact that he did not associate with the disciples at a time when he most needed the solace of their intercourse that he was not present when Jesus appeared in their midst and breathed His "peace be unto you" upon them. Perhaps, dear friends, for similar reasons you may have missed the help and the comfort which Jesus could have offered you had you been present on some days on which you were absent from His House. The long-continued brooding of Thomas has led to the result to which such brooding must inevitably lead. He will no longer accept the evidence of his friends. He no longer trusts them. He must see for himself and experience for himself the blessings which they possess. "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my fingers into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe." These words seem very reasonable to some. They mark the cold logician, the matter-of-fact man. They typify the man who will be guided only by his brain, who, because of the many deceptions and delusions to which he has been subjected, will have nothing to do with anything that cannot be tested and found true to sense-perception. And yet we ask, whither does such a religion of and for the intellect lead? Thomas had forgotten that all things must be tested by the heart as well as by the head, and

that things that do not appear clear when treated either as matters of the head or heart exclusively become luminous when viewed from the standpoint of the whole man. Thomas had forgotten the power over death which Jesus manifested in his presence. He had forgotten that Jesus said to him, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." How was it that Thomas forgot so absolutely in this crisis that Jesus was Himself the Prince of Life? We are led to admit that the faith of Thomas was not a strong faith, not as yet a living faith, but thank God there was still a spark of faith in his heart. If there had not been he would not have allied himself with his old comrades a week after the resurrection. Jesus had not reappeared in the meantime. He did not know that He would reappear. He was still receptive to the truth. Though he had frankly and openly confessed that he would not believe until he had seen, he did not shut himself off from those influences which were necessary to the quickening of his faith. The confession which he was about to utter was, as we have said, that of one who had not come upon a great truth suddenly, but of one who had meditated for years upon the probability of what he was about to confess as a certainty.

There in the hall in which they had assembled a week before are the ten who had seen Christ, and this time Thomas is with them. The scene is to be repeated in its exact original setting. The doors are shut. The Master appears unto them. Again He utters that welcome greeting and blessing, "Peace be unto you." The moment of suspense was critical. What would Jesus say to Thomas? Would He again receive him into the band of believing disciples? The suspense was not to be prolonged. Compassionate as Christ ever was, yet fully recognizing the necessity of justice, He saw the conflicts which were surging in the breast of the storm-tossed disciple. Upon Thomas, therefore, the command was enjoined: "Reach

hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing." The voice, plus the sight, proved too much for the disciple. Before him stands He Who in His body bears the print of the nails and the wound inflicted by the spear. More than that, before him stands the Christ Who predicted over and over again that He would arise from the dead. As there has been a moment of suspense, an expectancy on the part of both Jesus and His disciple and the ten who were witnesses of the unusual scene, there is a moment of suspense for us. The suspense is not to be prolonged, for the faith of the wellnigh lost disciple was quickened through the tremendous influence of the God-man. His language is not overdrawn. As a matter of fact, he feels the difficulty of properly expressing his inmost feelings. Hence his words are the feeble echo of an awakened recognition of the truth. His speech came as the spontaneous outpouring of a soul flooded with new life. The words become doubly important if we view them as the aftermath of a fierce conflict. They were not the outburst of a momentary ecstasy. They were not the resultant of a modern revival. They were the resultant of a very real tribulation on the part of one who, though he had been a member of the band of disciples of Jesus, had, nevertheless, always persevered in a state of doubt concerning his position. Words such as these, uttered under the circumstances which called them forth, can only be interpreted as the confession of a truly believing disciple. His victory over unbelief is not a clean-cut, thornless victory. Before he is permitted to enter fully upon the privileges of discipleship he must face his Lord's rebuke. And it is his willingness to face that rebuke which proves the completeness of his regeneration. His willingness to surrender an untenable position marks him as one in whom the Lord had not trusted in vain.

It has again been our privilege to celebrate the week in which we commemorate the passion and death of our Lord. It has again been our privilege to listen to the message of His resurrection. Can we remain passive? Can we be told this story year after year and be deaf to the great love of the Savior? Have we or have we not been led with Thomas to the crucial moment in our lives when it simply becomes necessary with Thomas to exclaim: "My Lord and my God?" Israel linked the two terms and spoke of the Lord God in designating Jehovah. Yet there is a difference, for to them God was not as close as He was to Thomas. To them He appeared to be a strange, far-away God. The difference between their conception of God and that of Thomas is contained in the little personal pronoun which Thomas employs, a pronoun which they employed for Israel conjointly, but which they never, except in rare instances, applied to the individual. To us, as to Thomas, this God is my God, this Lord is my Lord. He is my Lord and my God because "He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, secured and delivered me from all sins, from death and from the power of the devil, not with silver and gold, but with His holy and precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, in order that I might be His, live under Him in His Kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness, even as He is risen from the dead and lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true." The first personal pronoun must be emphasized, but so emphasized that it is lost in the following nouns: The Lord is my Lord. God is my God. In recognizing this fact, I resign myself entirely into His keeping and enjoy completely and unequivocally the Christian liberty which is the heritage of all true believers. This unequivocal acceptance of Christ led to the celebration of Holy Communion in the early church on this day because in this act Christ and the believer are

at one. Our strength is in Him. Our life is in Him. "He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life."

XXXI.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

JOHN 10: 11.

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep."

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." In an abandon of trust so unqualified, so unreserved, so absolute, a king tottering to the grave, once a youthful shepherd boy watching the flocks of his father upon the plains hard by the little town of Bethlehem, poured forth the intensity, the depth, the loveliness of his religious consciousness in the presence of the Lord of Whom he sang. It is little wonder the prayer has reverberated down the ages. In this beautiful lyric he has expressed nobly, sincerely and adequately the passionate love of the true believer for his shepherd. In this lyric he has not only opened his heart to God but to all the world as well.

As the sheep committed to David's keeping were secure, so the shepherd boy, the defender of his father's flock from robbers and wild beasts, was equally secure because he too had a shepherd in whose vigilance he trusted with the same degree of confidence which the sheep manifested toward him. Is it too much to say that David was what he was in after life because early in life he mastered a lesson which his vocation taught him? In the presence of Goliath it was this trust in the Lord his shepherd which made him victorious. In the presence of Saul torn by the evil spirit, the good spirit of the Lord in the bosom of David averted the deadly spear and the deadlier hatred. In the presence of Nathan

the one-time trust, forgotten in a moment of weakness, was rekindled as the thought of this merciful shepherd brought to shame within him the thought of the robber of his poor neighbor's lamb. Confronted by a mutinous son the refrain rings in his ear and thus throughout life to its very close, though chastened and subdued, no longer the buoyancy of youth but now the vigor of victorious old age causes the singing of the shepherd psalm "the Lord is my shepherd I shall not want".

What a blessed faith this is which can cling to its Lord in sorrow and in joy, for if it is thus tenacious the Lord will prove its efficacy. If this be our faith He will assuredly appear to us as He appeared not only to David but to the little band of disciples, breathing His benediction upon them, blessing them as He utters the significant promise "peace be unto you". Of course, He did not mean temporal peace. He did not mean that at last the day of Israel's temporal redemption had dawned. As He spoke these words they must have remembered that sometime before He said to them "peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth give I unto you". He has endured the cross. The disciples must take it and bear it too. They must endure persecution, tribulation, anguish, famine, nakedness, peril, sword. They must be accounted as sheep for the slaughter but in all these things they will be more than conquerors through Him that loved them. The peace which is to make possible the spread of the gospel and the establishment of the kingdom of Christ upon earth is a peace no one can take from them for it is the peace of God which passeth understanding. As shepherds the apostles are to go forth to bring all nations to the true shepherd.

It was not strange that Jesus delighted in using this picture of oriental life to portray one of the greatest lessons He had to teach. The figure of the shepherd

loomed large in the life of the east. Jesus transfigured it, changed its symbolism, as He was a bit later to change the symbolism of the lamb into a truer, higher significance. The shepherd must be to his sheep and his lambs what the mother is to her child, a constant monitor, a constant protector, ever watchful lest the obstacles in their path be too great to be surmounted. Here there are stones which may prove hurtful and need to be removed. There is a ditch which must be filled in lest the lambs fall into it. In yonder meadows there is better pasturage. The way across is a bit dangerous, but it must be undertaken. The sheep are thirsty and need to be led to the still waters. The shepherd is tired. He ought to rest, but just as he is about to turn over his post to another for a little while, he observes a wolf prowling in the vicinity and he finds it necessary to postpone his rest and continue his vigil. The battle with the wolf is imminent. The outcome means the sacrifice of a life, either the life of the shepherd or the life of the wolf.

The shepherd's life is pre-eminently the life of Jesus. It is the life of His disciples as well. Their task is to be that of going forth into the world to gather and preserve the fold. In those early days of persecution and distress which dawned in their crimson wierdness on a world that was awakening from troubled dreams there were many incursions among the flock. The morning light disclosed the slain form of many a shepherd and the bloody traces of the depredation wrought by the wolf in his nightly prowlings. That the flock was able to increase under conditions such as these, that new shepherds were found, willing to take the places of those slain on the preceding night, these facts stand for the power of Christianity. Throughout all the centuries from the days of Jesus Christ to the present day the battle between the wolves and the one Shepherd has been going on. At times it has seemed almost as if the

wolf must be successful, but just at such moments a well-directed javelin thrust from the Lord's own hand has shielded the flock from imminent danger. It may not be amiss to contrast the hireling and the true shepherd and then ask ourselves just what is expected of the flock to which we belong to facilitate the shepherd's task.

We must have hirelings just as long as we live in a world which is imperfect in its social adjustments. Let us be absolutely sure we know just what we mean by the term. We do not mean any and every one in the service of another. Though that is the literal meaning of the term, it was not in this sense that Jesus employed it. Undoubtedly there were many shepherds in the orient who though they did not own the sheep, literally speaking, did have a share in the ownership of those sheep because of the very personal interest they took in them. Such shepherds, employed by others and receiving compensation for their labors, were decidedly not hirelings. The men and women of today who are engaged in doing the world's work by others and who receive their compensation from others for the performance of honest duty adequately well done in an interested manner are not hirelings. Christ distinguishes between the men and women whose sole endeavor is to gain a livelihood in the easiest possible manner and the men and women who are unafraid of hard work, who court hard work and large responsibilities as the way in which they can fulfil their mission here on earth. Rebekah and Rachel drawing water and caring for the flocks and herds of their fathers are not hirelings. Moses, keeping the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, is no hireling. David, the son of Jesse, keeping his father's sheep is no hireling. And yet they are not the real owners of the sheep.

The oriental hireling and the occidental hireling, the hireling of Jesus' day and of our day are alike in this

that they have little or no interest in what they are doing. Their time is equally divided between the sheepfolds and the market-place. In the market-place they lounge and spend their wages and wait for further employment. While employed they wait for the passing of the time for which they have been employed. The requirements of the true shepherd in engaging their services are not unreasonable. He asks of them that they discharge the duties which fall to the lot of a real shepherd. They are to lead and provide for the sheep. They are to sustain a sympathetic relationship to both the shepherd and the sheep. They are to learn to know the sheep. They are to prove faithful in times of emergency. But see how disappointed the shepherd is bound to be as he realizes that his hopes, his requests, his reasonable expectations have been ignored. "He that is a hireling and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, beholdeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth, and the wolf snatcheth them, and scattereth them: he fleeth because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep." The cowardliness, the coldness, the traitorism, the criminality of it all is simply appalling. The reason is after all very plain "he careth not for the sheep". How can you expect anything else? The rule thus indicated applies of course to the extension or limitation of the Kingdom of God on earth and it is to this the Lord would direct our attention. Why is it that things are as they are in the spiritual realm? Why are there so few real workers for Christ? Simply because in our ranks there are so many hirelings. You will not mistake my meaning. Though false teachers are often spoken of as hirelings, we are not at this point thinking of false teachers, however pernicious their influence may be. Nor are we thinking of the many men and women who are drawing salaries for the work they are supposed to be doing in the Vineyard who are acquitting themselves

simply as hirelings. We are thinking and we must think today of the many men and women who have accepted Christ in their baptism and confirmation and in the reception of the Holy Communion and who go forth from the services of the House of God to live solely unto themselves, who because they are not salaried officers of the church feel they have a perfect right to flee from responsibility and danger—men and women who act in this way are hirelings. Hirelings are false prophets whether they be in the pulpit or in the pew. Hirelings are lazy, shiftless, indolent disdainers of the duties which they owe to him in whose service they stand. The picture of the hireling presented by the Lord is tragical in the extreme. Before us is the flock scenting danger, in the distance the wolf whose evil intent is unmistakable, and separating himself from the flock, not in the direction of the threatening danger, but in the direction of personal safety we see the despicable coward whose title has become the synonym for traitorism. His duty as he sees it is to save himself. His life is worth more—to him and to him only—than many flocks of sheep. What matters it to him if the sheep suffer? What matters it if this catastrophe undermines the health and happiness of many people dependent upon these very flocks? It is for himself that he cares. "He careth not for the sheep". Can you not see how contemptible such a view of life really is? Are there any hirelings in this church this day?

Turning from this picture may I ask you for a few moments to consider the details of that other picture presented in this same lesson? The picture of the good shepherd, a picture which teaches the lesson of love and devotion more beautifully and tenderly than perhaps any other? The flock before us consists of the same helpless animals we saw but a moment ago. The background is exactly the same, the same fertile, green meadows,

the same silent waters, the same enclosures for seasons of danger, and yet how wonderfully different this picture is. Of course you know why! It is simply because there is a different figure in the fore-ground. You need not be told of this transformation. It is very evident. The sheep no longer huddled together in fear about their leaders are grazing peacefully and trustfully. The mothers of the flock no longer bleating in anguish as they realize the danger of their unprotected lambs, are bleating in joy because of the tender care of the good shepherd. We need not be told that He is the good shepherd. We need not be told that a good shepherd layeth down his life for his sheep. We need not be told that this good shepherd knows every one of his sheep by name, an actual fact in oriental life. We need not be told that this shepherd has other sheep for we know that His love is sufficiently extensive to include flocks other than the one in the foreground. Perhaps the most striking feature in this picture is the readiness and willingness on the part of the good shepherd to serve. As shepherd he must lead the flock, but as shepherd he must also serve the flock and this service must be in inverse ratio to the ability of the members of the flock to take care of themselves. Has this not been the experience of Christianity, the help of God ever extended first to the weak and the poor, and yet a sufficient leadership, a sufficient grace for the tutored and the rich? The Nicodemuses and the Josephs of Arimathea of our day will place no obstacles in the way of such leadership. On the other hand, ought we not expect them to help in the realization of this program?

Satan, a very real Satan, is the wolf who is endeavoring to overthrow the Kingdom of our Lord. "The fulness of time" meant among other things the fulness of his time, the time when of all times the battle must be fought, a very propitious time for the powers of dark-

ness to do their worst. Jesus came into the world in the fulness of time because the world was full of hirelings unable to cope with the situation, unable to set up the standard of righteousness, unable to put down sin. John the Baptist could never have done what Jesus did. John's work was negative. It was to tear down idols, to set forth the existence and the ugliness of sin. The work of Jesus was to substitute righteousness for sin, to enthrone God in the places from which John had removed the idols. Jesus is the one true shepherd because He alone, the only-begotten Son of God, endures test after test, emerging victorious after every battle. The prophets have fought well, but they have not won their battles consistently. There has been a capitulation at a critical moment which has necessitated the continuation of the campaign under a different leadership. Jesus is the good shepherd because He and He alone has entered fully into the life problems of every single soul in this world. He is the good shepherd because He has laid down His life for the sheep, in place of the sheep.

The story of the good shepherd holds out no appeal to those who value a story only because of its intellectual worth. It is true the life of the oriental shepherd so dominates the clime in which he thrives we could readily spend a long time in becoming acquainted with the various details of the career so prominently pictured in the Bible. The real and vital appeal of this story is to the heart. The vocation of the good shepherd is not his profession coldly conceived, the vocation of the good shepherd is as the term indicates His call to the only sphere in life which appeals to Him. To understand the story of the good shepherd we must on the one hand be students of the prose of life, but on the other hand we dare not be ignorant of its poetry. The relation which the lone hunter sustains to the faithful dog that accompanies him into solitary wilds, the relation

which the Arabian nomad sustains to his steed, the relation which the shepherd sustains to his sheep, these are relationships of conscious, devoted love on the part of man toward the animal world, reflected in the devoted love which God sustains toward the creature. The hunter dies with his dog. The Arab dies with his steed, but the shepherd dies for his sheep.

XXXII.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

JOHN 16: 16.

"A Little While."

The Easter Cycle of Sundays, to which this day belongs, is a most important season of the Christian year, because it reviews the promises of the Lord in the light of their fulfilment and repeats unfulfilled promises based upon an authority which cannot be questioned. Quite naturally our minds revert to the now distant past as we read the Easter story. We are brought but eight days further on our journey as we read the Gospel lesson for the Sunday following Easter, the story of a morose disciple who is forced to believe. The story of the good shepherd again carries us back to an oriental environment of an early day. The lesson for this day, recorded in the sixteenth chapter of the gospel according to John, bids us revert to the night preceding the crucifixion and re-study the words of the Savior addressed to His disciples, as a legacy of priceless worth.

But why revert to these scenes of twenty centuries ago? Why shall we be concerned with discourses and problems which on the face of them point backward, ever so far, and then point forward into a future we know not how distant? It is because we have brought ourselves to reason thus that the beautiful narratives of Holy Writ are ignored and neglected by many, accepted as pure literature by some, as history by others, and as an abstract philosophy of life by those who realize the need for such a philosophy but are unwilling to proceed further in their thought processes.

The cardinal truth of the resurrection story and its resultant lessons does not lie in any local setting, but in an applicability as a dynamic which is to be felt in your life and in mine. "As Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so *we* should walk in newness of life." (Rom. 6: 4.) If the subject matter of the narrative recorded in the sixteenth chapter of John had been limited to the circle of the disciples and the evening preceding the day of the crucifixion, we might well study it as an interesting bit of archæology, from the standpoint of either literature or history; but its inclusion among the lessons to be read and studied and interpreted on the Sundays after Easter, year after year, twenty centuries after the occurrence of the narrative, is recognition of the vital importance of the message for you and for me as well as for the disciples. Fully conscious of impending death, the Savior has drawn apart with His disciples in order to commune with them. His heart is heavy as He tells them that they shall soon behold Him no more but soon thereafter they shall again see Him. The disciples realize the anguish of their Master, but do not comprehend its reason. They consult among themselves: "What is this that He saith, a little while? We know not what He saith." Jesus, reading their perplexity, adds thereto momentarily by the enunciation of a great truth which they are to master slowly. "Verily, verily, I say unto you that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." He illustrates in a very realistic manner how this sorrow is to be converted into joy. Now they are constrained to debate among themselves and to ask Him concerning mysteries hidden from ages and generations. A little later He tells them these questions will no longer arise to harass them. The iteration and reiteration of the words "a

little while" perplexes the disciples. It perplexes the disciples no more than us.

Let me repeat the words, "a little while." Let me ask you to think of them seriously and then let me ask you to lend expression to your thought. Let me indicate certain of the avenues of approach. There is a certain rich man whose judgment we shall obtain first. He tells us plainly that he has no use for this term in his vocabulary. He has reaped enormously. He will build greater barns and coffers. He says to his soul: "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry." He denies the existence of any such term, "a little while." God forces its recognition upon him. "This night" is God's answer to the self-inflated prater.

We shall next ask the ungodly to define the term. With an abandon that is frightful he acknowledges the validity of the words as he urges you to "eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die." We turn for a moment to the rich young man who, of his own volition, has come to Jesus in order that he might obtain the gift of eternal life. On discovering that a real gift on the part of Jesus implies also a real gift on his own part, he turns from Jesus in order to enjoy his earthly possessions "a little while." We turn to still another who is anxious to be counted among those of more serious thought, but he too, with the rich man, though from a different motive, denies the existence of the term. "Let me go first and bury my father," he says, "and then I will come and follow thee."

There are many others standing near who might be questioned. Peter has come to a recognition of the little while as he seeks to atone for his shameful denial. Thomas, looking upon his Lord and God, is forcibly reminded of the little while of doubt and uncertainty. The intense application of Christ, as He interests Him-

self personally in the least and the greatest of men, the poor and the rich, the high and the low, makes us realize the constant emphasis which He places in both word and deed upon "the little while." We have called the roll of others. Let us turn for a moment to self. Let me ask you, To what use are you putting the little while entrusted to your keeping here?

"A little while and ye shall not see me and again a little while and ye shall see me." How tender the love of the Father and the compassion of the Son! How forbearing! The little while of sight is to precede the little while of anticipation. The faith demanded of the disciples is not greater than the opportunity offered them or in contradiction thereto. Sight precedes as long as such an order is deemed necessary, but faith precedes sight when the call, the invitation, the gentle voice of Jesus has reached the ear of humanity.

Yesterday I stood by the deathbed of a young woman in one of our hospitals, who looked at me in a most searching manner as she said, "I know that I shall not get well. Pray for me, won't you please pray for me?" Now, this woman did not say, she could not say that she had had no opportunity to learn to know Jesus. Yet, as a matter of fact, she did not learn to know Him sooner because she would not. With churches round about her, with Christian people ready and anxious to help her, with Christian institutions beckoning and pleading and urging and sustaining, with announcements and reports and occasional editorials in the daily press, how could *she*, how can *you* blame any one except self?

My dear friend, to what use are you putting the little while entrusted to your keeping? It may be that your interests are centered in the building up of a large commercial enterprise. Barn must be added to barn, storehouse to store-house, field to field, new machinery must supplant the old, an ever larger force of human beings

must be employed. You are intensely interested in every fluctuation in the world of barter and of trade. You know full well that the vessels which are bearing your merchandise, the trains which convey your cargoes, the individuals who are planning their distribution, are one and all resistlessly engaged in their great work day after day. The machinery once started, it is exceedingly difficult to have it stopped and thus we come to a tardy recognition that the world of commerce and of trade does not stop to ask whether a man belongs to the ranks of labor or of capital, whether he be at the top or at the bottom of the ladder, he is driven on by the force of the wheels of industry. He labors or plans seven days a week until at last the widow of the man of wealth clasps hands with the widow of the man of toil, as both lament the unsatisfactoriness of the life that has passed, its association with hard labor, its relentless grind. Are you ready for eternity if there has been nothing more than this?

In asking, to what use are you putting the little while entrusted to your keeping, we turn from the fathers to the sons and daughters. Suppose the fathers have been successful in the achievement of life's purpose as they have defined it. Suppose they have been enabled to build ever greater barns. Suppose they have left this heritage to you not for ever but for a little while, measured either by the span of life or the span of indiscretion. Have you thought of the problem which confronts you? Have you fully measured the trust imposed upon you? What is your viewpoint? What is your intention? Suppose you need not care for the morrow, will you spend your life in pure pleasure, in selfish pleasure, in the gratification of the senses? Will you say to your soul, "Soul, thou hast many things laid up for many days, take thine ease, eat and drink"? There are individuals who reason thus and act accordingly. The little

while is soon spent. The verdict is rendered. The judgment of the world and of God are not very different.

The catalogue might be continued indefinitely. There is a dominant note in your life, an impulse, an ambition, a virtue, a vice, a holy purpose, some one dominant note which distinguishes you from others and characterizes you in the eyes of others. It is important that you should endeavor to learn what that passion is. Ask those who know you best. Question your own conscience. Ask God.

Jesus spent a little while with the disciples, not that He might learn from them, not that they might show Him the allurements of the world, not that they might influence Him, but simply and solely for the purpose of teaching them, influencing them, leading them in paths of righteousness, and during the period of His bodily withdrawal for "a little while" an opportunity was afforded them of getting their bearings, of meditating upon His teachings, of coming to a realization of the folly of endeavoring henceforth to live without Him.

There is one thing we ought not, we dare not forget. The words, "a little while," refer to temporal conditions. They are to be applied to the bodily presence of Jesus only, not to His spiritual presence. He would teach the disciples that the bodily presence is merely a prelude, a prologue, an introduction, a preface to His abiding spiritual presence. As they employ their moments in intercourse with Him, as they live by the bread which He supplies and the water with which He quenches their thirst, they shall never again either hunger or thirst. They shall never again be without Him who has said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." How sharply the line of cleavage is defined. "A little while" on one hand, "alway" on the other, but "alway" only as the resultant of the little while. Do not ask, why did Jesus not continue to dwell in human

form? Do not ask why is the little while extended in the case of John and abridged in the instance of James? Do not ask why are the opportunities of one greater than the opportunities which are accorded another. In so doing you are wasting the little while in useless questioning. Know, on the other hand, that Jesus has warned you lovingly. His ambassadors have repeated His message, the Church has re-echoed the gospel tidings of peace, and many consecrated Christians have endeavored by their precepts and example to impress upon you the seriousness of it all. A little while of intercourse with Him; how rich these moments fraught with blessing. A little while of Christian intercourse with those round about you.

Will you permit me to lend a personal touch to this subject, which is to impress upon you the reality, the nearness, the seriousness of it all? In a former parish of mine there was a youth whom it was my privilege to instruct in the essentials of Christian faith and life. He confessed allegiance to his Lord and Master and became a communicant member of our congregation. With a heart full of gratitude toward God, I noted the earnestness and spirituality of the young man and realized a constant advancement in his spiritual thought and life. With great interest I followed him through school. He easily led his class in a school which stands in the front rank of our preparatory schools. He not only led his class, but attained the highest average ever awarded a graduate of the school. His proficiency was not one-sided. He was interested in athletics and became a strong runner. On graduation, his brilliant talents were recognized and rewarded. A scholarship was provided for him at Yale University. He entered upon his studies there with the same marked devotion and acumen which have already been noted. His teachers say the leader-

ship in his class lay between him and one other man in a class of 700.

He had begun nobly. His race had but started. He was permitted to run but a little while. His parents were suddenly summoned to his bedside in the somewhat distant University town. The young man realized he could not recover. There was no eleventh-hour conversion. There was no religious hysteria. Quietly and calmly he informed his parents of his condition. He asked his father to pray for him, and then he prayed; and what a prayer it was! First, he commended his parents into the keeping of God, then he prayed that they might meet in heaven, and finally he committed his soul into the guardianship of his Heavenly Father. Having thanked the physicians and nurses for their heroic efforts in his behalf, he turned feebly to his mother and said, "Good-bye, God be with you." A brilliant future before him, parents able to provide for him, he a young man whose pre-eminence in studies did not produce the slightest affectation, was summoned home. His period of pilgrimage was for but a little while. His associations with young men were but for a little while. He had time and opportunity in his short and busy life for but a few words and conversations, yet who among us will say the little while was not worth while? In his active identification with the work of the Christian Association of one of the great universities of the land, he proved that it is not enough to possess a sound mind in a sound body, but that manhood of the Christian type and pattern demands a sound soul, a sound mind and a sound body; or, if you still cling to the more familiar designation, "a sound mind in a sound body," remember that no mind is sound which does not employ the immediate present in constructive endeavor, in building for life and eternity. As it does this, as it exercises itself in the work which God has given it to do, it converts the little while into an

unending, blessed eternity for self and others. This, after all, is the purpose of the little while which Jesus would spend with you and me as His disciples even now. It is "in order that I might be His, live under Him in His Kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness; even as He is risen from the dead, and lives and reigns to all eternity." Some things may appear as dark and as enigmatic to you as they appeared to the disciples. Do as they did, even while they question among themselves they follow Him. Unconsciously, as it were, they realize the preciousness of the little while. Consciously they realize the validity of the "alway" of which "a little while" was but the most infinitesimal fraction.

XXXIII.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

JOHN 16:8.

"He, when he is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness and of judgment."

The last discourse of Jesus with His disciples, delivered at least in part in the room in which the Master and they have just partaken of their last supper before His death, is intensely interesting because of the earnestness of Jesus and the earnestness of His disciples. It is interesting because of the many interruptions on the part of the disciples and because of the manner in which Jesus invariably leads them back again to the fundamental truth He would impart at this crucial point. You of course remember John's version of the circumstances of that evening. "During supper the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son to betray him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he came forth from God, and goeth unto God, riseth from supper" to wash the feet of His disciples, thereby to teach them a lesson in humility and service. Then as He was constrained to point out the betrayer we are told that He was troubled in spirit.

Judas having received the sop left the room straightway "and it was night." At this point the last discourse begins. The traitor has left the band. The final struggle has begun. Jesus looks upon it as one who beholds the redemption drawing nigh as already at hand. "Now is the Son of man glorified." Then He employs the

term which is distinctively that of John who borrowed it from His Master and is permitted to use it as he addresses his hearers when he has grown to be an old man and none of those present in that room that evening were any longer upon earth. "Little children, yet a little while I am with you." On announcing His departure, Simon Peter interrupts Him as he asks: "Whither goest thou?" But Peter is living in the present. His question does not refer to the going of Jesus to the Father. It refers to the immediate next step as they have finished their supper and are about to go out into the night. In this sense Peter does not know why he cannot follow his Master. The enthusiasm of the disciple as he says "I will lay down my life for thee" is not deep-seated and needs to be revealed in all its superficiality by Jesus who says: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, the cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice." As the last discourse could not begin with Judas present to distract the attention of the disciples from the consideration of vital subjects, it could not begin until with this sweeping charge Simon Peter who was bound to interrupt with well-meant but specious comments had been silenced. Then Jesus begins to address words of comfort and assurance to the disciples as He says: "Let not your heart be troubled." He would speak to them of the way and the goal. He has just said: "And whither I go, ye know the way." This offers Thomas, the meditative disciple who has since the asking of Peter's question been concerned about its answer, an opportunity that was not directly vouchsafed before. Hence we have the second interruption as Thomas saith unto Him: "Lord, we know not whither thou goest; how know we the way?" The thought of Thomas is undoubtedly more profound than that of Peter. He has been grappling with the question in its deeper significance and consequently he is to receive a

deeper answer from his Master and Jesus says: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." Shortly after, Philip, who is somewhat bewildered concerning the oft-repeated reference of Jesus to the Father in His discourse and who is anxious to have a clearer perception of this Father says: "Lord, show us the Father and it sufficeth us." He must be told that the Father is revealed in the Son and the Son in the Father. The personal revelation of Christ and the Father to the individual believer is hardly intelligible to those who have been looking for a Messiah who would in their estimation reveal Himself to the world, hence the further interruption of Judas, not Iscariot: "Lord, what is come to pass that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not unto the world?" Disposing of this question by referring to the necessarily prior place of personal relationship Jesus speaks of the subject which is uppermost in His mind, the sending of the Holy Spirit who is to assume a position of leadership.

During this post-Easter season we are permitted to study the various relationships which the Spirit who is to conquer the world is to assume toward the disciples and the world. Today we are to consider His relationship to the world. In His relationship to the disciples we have been permitted to look upon Him as a Comforter or as the other Comforter for Christ is Himself to be looked upon as a Comforter who sends another. In His relationship to the world we are to look upon Him as an advocate who pleads the cause of God against an ungodly generation or as a court of last appeal. There is to be no reversal from His judgment, no forgiveness if we turn from Him and decide not to submit to His gracious but no less positive sway. The sphere of the Holy Spirit in the relationship which He sustains to the world is that of one called upon to convict. He shall make it perfectly clear to the world that it has been guilty of three gross

transgressions of the commandments of God. The first of these transgressions has reference to a misinterpretation on the part of the world of the term sin and a consequent disregard for sin.

Sin, in the eyes of Israel, had lost its personal significance. The outcry of the Psalmist "Against thee, thee only have I sinned" was no longer heard as the intense personal plea of a child of God for the re-establishment of a severed relationship. The whole scheme of sacrifices constantly being elaborated by men who obscured the idea of sin and righteousness with their systems of penance and of fasts, separated between the children of men and their God. To an age such as that of Jesus was, this statement of the Holy Spirit's first duty in His contact with the world was revolutionary in the extreme. Jesus says the Holy Spirit will convict the world because of sin and lest the disciples misunderstand what He is saying and again interrupt Him by asserting this to be a thing they very well know, Jesus proceeds to tell them what He means by sin. His explanation is nothing less than a re-definition of the term. They looked upon sin as the transgression of God's law. Moses had taught them, and it was God who taught Moses, that certain things well definable were to be shunned and excluded from their lives. But Israel had completely forgotten that long before Moses lived and long before they received ten commandments written on tables of stone God imputed righteousness on the one hand and sinfulness on the other and the basis of the imputation of the one or the other was faith or unbelief, faith in the instances of Abraham and Noah, unbelief in their contemporaries. Thus the Holy Spirit is to recover for them God's primal laws and ordinances and is to teach the world of Jesus' age and of our own that sin is lack of faith in Christ. May we not try to grapple with this truth? We say "thou shalt not

kill." "Why not, under certain conditions," is a question sometimes asked. Are there not certain persons without whom this world could very well get along? There are outlaws who live in their mountain fastnesses spending their lives in no other pursuit than in that of preying upon their fellow-men. There are men and women in our cities, known to our physicians, in whom destructive fires have been kindled which cannot be extinguished until death shall claim its victims in a most agonizing, gruesome, horrid manner. And we might multiply these illustrations to try to prove as some do, that a transgression of the commandment "thou shalt not kill" is justifiable from the standpoint of the survival of the fittest. In so doing we should be dealing with a world in which there is no God. If I believe there is a God who rules in heaven and on earth, if I believe this God is infinite in power and justice and love, if I believe this God to be interested in the affairs of men, if I believe that earth is merely a training school for eternity, if I believe that God is the creator of man and has given to all men life and its enjoyment as a sacred trust, if I believe that God is working out a great plan which I cannot now understand, if I believe that when this plan is evolved all will be made clear and then even those things which seem to be so inscrutable shall be interpreted clearly, if I believe all these things and many more which pertain to the world in which God moves, then of course I shall at once see that obedience rendered any one of the commandments is but a necessary resultant of my faith. In other words to the man who believes in God and Jesus Christ there will be no question concerning the fulfilment of the commandments. He simply cannot kill. He simply cannot steal. He simply cannot commit adultery. These things are made impossible by his faith. Now Jesus had amply demonstrated to those who cared to see and know that He and the Father were one. The

disciples though they had not seen the Father as they had thought He might be seen by His children had seen Him in exactly the way the Father had chosen to manifest Himself—namely, in the Son. And this was true not only of the disciples but of the multitudes to whom Christ preached, whom He taught, whose sick He restored and whose dead He raised to life. It was to be a function of the Holy Spirit to bring to the consciousness of many of those who joined in the cry of "crucify, crucify" a remembrance in after life of their unbelief. It is equally true today that sin can be traced to our willingness to try to get along without a Savior. Sin is not an act in its inmost nature nor a series of acts, but sin is a state, a state of unbelief, in which state we naturally act as those do who think they can get along without Christ. It is the Holy Spirit's duty to convict the world on this score and to show the world that it is wrong.

In another respect is the Holy Spirit asked to exercise His authority. He is to convict the world with reference to righteousness. You will remember the intensity of the struggle between the powers of darkness and the power of light in the passion and death of Christ. We might truthfully say that this struggle had been going on throughout His life. His relatives and friends think He is mad. The leaders of Israel think He is an agent of Beelzebub. The Romans think He is an ignorant Galilean about whom entirely too much has been said. In the very hour of His death a challenge is issued that He demonstrate His divinity. And after His death guards are placed at the door of the sepulchre lest some deceit be practiced. It was possible for the friends of Jesus, the enemies of Jesus and the great mass which believe itself to be allied neither as friend nor foe to continue to harass Him to the very hour of death. It was impossible for any to carry their accusations, their

slanders, their torments, their scoffings beyond the portals of the grave. He has won the victory and in winning the victory He is transported from the battlefield to the right hand of God. The righteous man is the man who can call out in the midst of agony and woe "though He slay me, yet will I praise Him." The righteous man is the man who though he may be at war with all the world is at peace with God. The righteous man is he who does not crave or need the applause of men because he is conscious of the support of God. The righteousness of Christ leads at last to God's unwillingness to have Him forever defamed as a citizen of a world which disowns Him. The righteousness of Christ makes possible and necessary His return to the Father. Righteousness and humiliation are associated in this world. Righteousness and exaltation are just as truly associated in the Kingdom of God. The Lord's words are a sufficient answer to those who wonder why He was not permitted to remain forever upon earth. They are of tremendous value and force to those who are battling against undue odds, and feel they are accomplishing very little in their desire to serve their fellow-men.

A third sphere of the Holy Spirit is pointed out by Christ in His duty as an advocate. He is to convict the world of judgment. And Christ interprets His meaning by saying: "Of judgment, because the prince of this world has been judged." Men supposed to be religious, methods supposed to be proper, invectives thought to be holy, a penalty thought to be righteous, all these were employed in the crucifixion of Christ. From that moment the line of cleavage between men thought to be holy and men really holy, between methods supposed to be proper and methods actually proper, between judgments upon innocent persons and upon criminals, has been clearly drawn. Men may still continue to persecute the righteous but they no longer do it with approval and

commendation on every hand, men may resort to all sorts of unfair measures whereby to accomplish unholy ends, but they must declare their allegiance. The Prince of this world is judged. What a hidden store of meaning there is in this statement. Satan and his methods are no longer to be held in respect by the children of men. He is to be branded as a deceiver and destroyer of men. The Holy Spirit is to allow men no rest until they have declared their allegiance either to Satan or to God. They can no longer declare their allegiance to both. In the accomplishment of this end He is but fulfilling the work begun by Christ for "He shall glorify me; for he shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you."

Shall the Spirit of truth come to us as He comes to the world or shall He come to us as He is to come to the disciples, shall He come to us as an advocate, a prosecutor, or shall He come to us as a Comforter?

XXXIV.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

JOHN 16:26.

"In that day ye shall ask in my name."

Today as we look forward to the Ascension of the Son to the right hand of the Father we are to consider the very last discourse with His disciples, the address which is really a final recapitulation of essential doctrine. It is the practical "it is finished" when referred to the pedagogy of Jesus. The verse selected for our consideration is the summary of the summary, the golden key which is to unlock the portals of heaven and permit us to see the Lord seated at the right hand of majesty and power. The disciples and we with them are to carry about with us this key to the Kingdom "in that day ye shall ask in my name." To understand the meaning of the text we must try first of all to visualize the day of Jesus; we must next try to understand the potency of the name of Jesus; and we shall then of course seek to find the link which is forever to weld for us the day of Jesus and the name of Jesus.

What does Jesus mean in speaking of "that day?" He means primarily that His work has not yet been accomplished and that His day has not dawned. In another verse in this same chapter He says: "I came forth from the Father and am come into the world." Theologians have termed this the Kenosis of the Lord, meaning thereby that to one who had fully enjoyed the prerogatives of divinity it was a distinct humiliation to be born (even) of a virgin in a manger in a stable

in an inn in a little town of Judaea. It was a distinct humiliation for Him Who controlled all things to sacrifice all, not to know the blessings of a continued home life, to become a wanderer and a fugitive, to be hated and despised of men, to be spitefully entreated, to be mocked, to be scourged, to be betrayed and crucified. It was a great humiliation to be compelled to receive favors in the manner in which they were granted Him, to be misunderstood, and misinterpreted. Surely, if you know the history of the Christ, you will need no definition of humility and you will not need to be told that the day of Jesus did not dawn while He was still upon earth. The fact that Jesus was appreciated by the multitudes did not mean that His day had dawned. Politics in the days of Jesus were not better than they are today. The many did not rule. They meekly did what they were told to do, else why would they have turned so suddenly from their "Hosanna to the Son of David" to the frenzied "crucify Him, crucify Him?" Of course, Jesus remained true to His great life purpose. He had come to seek and to save. Effort upon effort was put forth to turn Him from His purpose. The inflamed cry of a multitude so recently sympathetic, the sudden flight of His disciples, the denial of Peter, the betrayal of Judas, the judgment which was no judgment accorded Him by Pilate, the false testimony of false witnesses, the shame of the cross, these and many more things were signs of the times indicating the unpreparedness of those who lived in the fulness of time for the dawn of His day.

But Jesus' day has dawned. It is not yet noon of the day of Jesus, but His day has dawned. What did He mean by the expression "in that day?" Some have referred it to His resurrection. Others have said it points to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Still others have interpreted it as referring

to the second advent of the Lord. There is truth in all these interpretations. It was His day when He arose from the dead and that day has continued in its sway over the lives of men and will continue. It was His day when the Comforter appeared Whom Jesus sent forth that He might abide with His people. It will be His day when He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. The one point on which all interpreters of the passage agree is that His day had not dawned before His sacrificial death. What a great lesson is contained herein! In how far did the day of Jesus dawn when He arose from the dead? There is but one dawn for each day. This day's dawn cannot be resolved into two or three separate and distinct dawns. Now whereas it is true that even this day has not dawned at the same moment in New York and in San Francisco, in Tokio and in London, it is equally true that this day has dawned at a given moment and in a given place and the dawn at that moment and in that place has been extended to such a degree that the day is still dawning for some while it is high noon for us. The day of Jesus has dawned in the same manner at a specified moment and at a specified place. His resurrection indicates the moment and His empty tomb the place, or instead of thinking of the empty tomb as the place might it not be well to think of the hearts of those first witnesses to the resurrection as the real place in which the day of Jesus dawned? The important fact to be borne in mind is that the dawn of Jesus' day follows close upon His death for our sins. No outward signs can gainsay the truth of this statement. Wars and rumors of wars do not change the fact. The apostasy of many in high and low places but confirms the dawn of His day. The drowsiness of the Christian church and its inability to meet the issues of the day worthily can in no wise be said to militate against the truth of this statement. The day of Jesus is not de-

pendent upon what you or I may think, but upon what Christ has wrought.

In a sense this day of Jesus dawned or rather its dawn was extended in visible form on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the assembled congregation in Jerusalem. The horizon became more luminous. The world was more clearly seen. Distances which seemed forbidding a moment before became contracted. The Christian church assumed a form which it had not yet acquired in the days of the earthly ministrations of Jesus. There was no going back. The clock must be advanced. It cannot be retarded.

The day of Jesus—in a sense, in its highest sense we shall not understand the full meaning of that term until we shall no longer have occasion to repeat the words of the creed "from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead." That He shall come to judge the quick and the dead is certain. We think perhaps too often and too consistently of our going to Him. We do not think seriously enough of Christ's coming to us. In the burial of the dead we think of their going to heaven, we do not think of Christ's coming from heaven to judge the quick and the dead. We think of the new heavens. We do not think of the new earth.

There are some of course, who prefer their own day to the day of Jesus. Those who live in open or in secret sin prefer their own day to the day of Jesus. Those who are either principals or seconds in looting banks, causing poverty and panic, bringing on war and bloodshed, have their day and then what? This is also true, is it not, of those who live entirely for self, having gained enough to say to their soul: "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry?" Can we mortals not learn just this much from the experience of Christ that purely human standards are very fallacious? A man may have

joy today and tomorrow it may be taken from him. Another may be a disciple of Christ and grieve today, but be filled with joy tomorrow. The acceptance of the day of Jesus, on the one hand, the acceptance of the world's day on the other, which shall it be? No, not which shall it be, which is it?

Jesus says, "In that day ye shall ask in my name." As there is a day of Jesus specified in the verse before us there is also the supplementary idea of the Name of Jesus. Is there any significance to be attached to a name? If not, why should God have changed the names of Abram and Sarai and Jacob and many others into larger names, *i. e.*, names of greater significance in the economy of His Kingdom? Why should the New Testament Saul have been anxious to exchange his Old Testament name? Why should Jesus have said to him whom we now know as Peter: "Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas," which is by interpretation a rock, if He attached no importance to this change in name? Surely, a name must stand for something. It must not be disassociated from the object or the person for which or for whom it stands. Was there not a clear demonstration of the power attached to one name and the absolute lack of power attached to another in the incident which took place upon Mt. Carmel in the days of Ahab? Time and again the name of Jehovah upon the banner of Israel means victory. Time and again the name of an opposing deity spells defeat. The reason is simple enough. In one instance the name stands for something. In another it stands for nothing. By way of interjection we may ask why is it that at times God permits His people to be defeated for surely Israel was not always victorious over its enemies. The answer is, because God is a just God and He cannot permit even His people to win if their cause is not a just cause. The test upon Mt. Carmel has its New Testament counter-

part upon Mars Hill. The prophet Elijah is supplanted by the Apostle Paul. The crude worship of the devotees of Baal surrenders to the refined worship of the Athenians. There are a number of altars in one group. There is but one in the other. The many altars are dedicated to known gods, the one to an unknown god. The Athenians appear as the priests of gods which they think they know about. Paul appears as the ambassador of a God known to him but unknown to them. The God Who meant little or nothing to the Athenians because disassociated from the Christ was everything to the apostle to whom the Christ had appeared. To him the altar was not an altar to an unknown God, but to a God whose name is above every name "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." We are permitted to know this glorified Christ Whom Paul knew. What does His name mean to you? Is it a name and nothing more? Some persons are prone to speak disparagingly of the influence which is needed to secure certain positions. It is true, of course, that influence may be perverted as it is in political life. It is nevertheless true that it is well for the world at large that references are required and that our associations mark us. Your association with or outside the circle of Jesus, your ability to use Him as a reference or your inability to secure His signature are of greater importance in your life than you may seem willing to admit.

If the day of Jesus is the vital thing we believe it to be, if the name of Jesus is the vital thing we know it to be, then surely we must appropriate and realize both in our lives. How can this be achieved? Through prayer. Before His day dawned on the earth His disciples had never prayed in His Name. They had approximated a

prayer in His Name when they united in the Lord's Prayer, for it was Christ Who made the Fatherhood of God real to them. But they had never deviated very materially from Jewish standards of prayer. They were to acquire a new power as we shall be re-created through prayer in Jesus' Name. Prayer in Jesus' Name must mean first of all a oneness with Christ of those who thus pray. Giving references is a much more serious piece of business than many people imagine. When a man comes to me with the endorsement of a friend I ever after associate him with that friend and my friend is either strengthened or weakened in my opinion by the manner in which his testimonial and the conduct of him who brings the testimonial coincide. It is a serious thing for any man to write a testimonial and it is an equally serious thing for any one to be the recipient and the transmitter of a testimonial. When you appear before the throne of God with the endorsement which is yours as you use the Name of Jesus you have accepted, voluntarily accepted, a responsibility which, if you do not discharge, you become a traitor. Hence prayer in Jesus' Name means first of all an identification on your part with the ideals of Jesus. It means that you are under obligation to Him and that you must fulfil the trust. In the second place prayer in the Name of Jesus means unselfish prayer. He Who is willing to spend His energy in endorsing the petitions of millions upon millions of persons is certainly not engaged in a selfish pursuit. The prayers of Jesus are not selfish prayers. Your prayers are selfish prayers and in so far they are not Christian prayers. Your prayer for health is a selfish prayer when it may be that the purposes of God are better brought to pass through your sickness. Your prayer for nourishment is a selfish prayer if thereby you mean to deprive the starving men and women of God's great world of food. Your prayer for victory is a selfish

prayer if thereby you mean the complete annihilation of your enemies. Your prayer for personal achievement and success is a selfish prayer if your success means the failure of another. Friends, in the great majority of instances our prayers are selfish prayers and hence are not and cannot be prayers in His Name Who came to give His life a ransom for many. In the third place, prayer in the Name of Jesus means prevailing prayer. In the very verse we have chosen we read: "In that day ye shall ask in my name: And I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you; for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came forth from the Father." Our prayer must not be directed to Jesus in the hope that He will relay it to the Father's throne, but our prayer must ascend directly to the Father's throne because of the Father's love for us and because of the guarantee which the name of Jesus affords.

May I repeat very briefly for the sake of impressing it upon your minds that true prayer implies oneness with Christ. Until we are at one with Him Who hath brought about our at-one-ment we are not prayers and cannot offer true prayers. In the next place, prayer in the Name of Jesus means unselfish prayer. It means that we have caught a bit of the world sorrow and the world's burden and that we are willing to be burden bearers. Prayers are burdens. And finally, prayer in the Name of Jesus means prevailing prayer. In no respect is it truer that you will get just what you deserve than in this appearance before the throne of grace.

May God Who knows how weak we are in our day and generation in this respect help us to shake off our slothfulness and our indifference and put on the mantle of prayer. May we join with Isaiah in his prayer for present mercy and help. "Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the

mountains might quake at thy presence, as when fire kindleth the brushwood, and the fire causeth the waters to boil; to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence! When thou didst terrible things which we looked not for, thou camest down; the mountains quaked at thy presence. For from of old men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen a God besides Thee, who worked for him that waiteth for him. Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways: behold, thou wast wroth, and we sinned: in them have we been of long time; and shall we be saved? For we are all become as one that is unclean, and all our righteousnesses are as a polluted garment: and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee; for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us by means of our iniquities.

"But now, O Jehovah, thou art our Father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand. Be not wroth very sore, O Jehovah, neither remember iniquity for ever: behold, look, we beseech thee, we are all thy people. Thy holy cities are become a wilderness, Zion is become a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burned with fire; and all our pleasant places are laid waste. Wilt thou refrain thyself for these things, O Jehovah? wilt thou hold thy peace, and afflict us very sore?"

XXXV.

ASCENSION DAY.

ACTS 1:9-11.

"And when he had said these things, as they were looking, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they were looking steadfastly into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; who also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? this Jesus, who was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven."

The high festival days of the Christian year are gospel days in such an intensive sense that the epistle lessons are often almost entirely forgotten. Suppose we should conduct an examination right here and now to ascertain what are the epistle lessons for Christmas day and Easter day, are there not some present who would hesitate a bit before answering these questions? And there is a reason for this hesitancy. We cannot rightly think of Christmas day or Easter day or any other of the festival days without centering our thought upon the central theme which is of course the gospel for the day. This is peculiarly true of the day we are celebrating. On Ascension day the epistle lesson blends so perfectly and absolutely with the gospel lesson we hardly feel we shall be misunderstood in saying that the church has proceeded in an unusual way and has rightly selected two narratives of one and the same gospel, assigning to one the title epistle and to the other the title gospel. In other words, Ascension day has no real epistle lesson. There are many passages in the epistles which might have been chosen for this day because they adequately

convey its teaching, notably among them the words of Paul in the epistle to the Ephesians based upon the Psalmist's exclamation "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led away captives; thou hast received gifts among men," or as Paul applies the message, "Wherefore he saith, when he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men," in which lesson Paul points the real lesson of Ascension day "He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things," that he might send the Comforter that in turn men truly called might be apostles or prophets or evangelists or pastors or teachers going forth in the name of Him Who is to fill all things. Ascension day has its message for the laity as well, but it conveys a very specific message to the disciples who are to go forth and preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The passages from the epistle which might have been assigned as lessons for this day have been barred simply because of the unconditional necessity of including the most specific narrative of Christ's ascension which is of course contained in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. The distinctively gospel narrative may be accurately defined because certain things are essential to it. There must be the necessary setting, the necessary act and the necessary message. The necessary setting for the gospel of Christmas day is the manger and the field. The necessary setting for the gospel of Easter day is the empty tomb. The necessary setting for Ascension day is the tangible earth and the tangible circle of disciples. The necessary act portrayed in the gospel for Christmas day is the Incarnation. The necessary act portrayed in the Easter gospel is the Resurrection. The necessary act portrayed in the so-called epistle lesson for this day is the Ascension. The necessary message contained in the Christmas gospel is the evangel of the angel: "There

is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." The necessary message contained in the Easter gospel is likewise the angel's announcement: "He is risen." The message of and for this day is again an angelic message: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? this Jesus, who was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven."

The ascension of Jesus Christ is a transitional act leading us from the seen to the unseen, from a world that is real to a world equally real, from earth to heaven, and from heaven back again to earth. This two-fold relationship may be illustrated by referring to the kinship between this festival and Good Friday on the one hand and between it and Whitsunday on the other hand. Chrysostom tells us that on Good Friday and again on Ascension day the early Christians, instead of assembling in their respective places of worship met for their services in the acres of God. In this manner they endeavored to visualize the unseen world. As the day was early made to point back to Good Friday, Jesus and the angels made it point forward to Whitsuntide and the coming of the Comforter. In the former instance the effort was made to bring the seen into touch with the unseen, in the latter, the unseen was to be brought into touch with the seen.

This transitional act marks the beginning of a new era for Christ. The things which Jesus began both to do and to teach until the very day in which He was received up marked a distinct era for Christ as well as for the world. The Incarnation marked the beginning of that era and the Ascension its close. As if to refute the thinking and teaching of those who would have this early dispensation close with the death and burial and resurrection of Christ Luke is exceedingly explicit in his language. The first era was to include the giving com-

mandment through the Holy Spirit unto the apostles whom he had chosen; it included the epiphanies of the risen Lord, together with the instructions they afforded; it included the re-affirmation of the promise of the Holy Spirit; it included the command that they should not begin their activity prematurely; it included the warning against purely human engagement in speculations of no real value and of positive harm; it included the going forth together for the last time for the fulfilment of the one act which was to be the culmination of Jesus' earthly intercourse with His disciples and the beginning of His eternal spiritual intercourse with His church. We have said the Ascension marks the beginning of a new era for Christ, an era which may in turn be characterized as a period of doing and teaching, doing and teaching in the application of redemption to all mankind. Have we sufficiently contemplated the importance of the activity of Christ in this new era? It is He Himself who says in His last discourse: "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send Him unto you." I like to feel that the first act of Christ in resuming His place in His Father's Kingdom was not the sending forth of the Comforter but the restraining of Himself and the Comforter until the disciples shall have had an opportunity through their mutual assemblages for prayer and meditation to be ready and willing to say "Here am I Lord, send me." During these days of earnest watchfulness they were not without the grace of God. They possessed it as truly as did Paul when after his conversion he went into seclusion to meditate upon the heavenly vision and his heavenly calling. Jesus must at times restrain Himself and the Spirit just as we believe that the Old Testament religion is a religion of restraint as well as of the immediate execution of vengeance and blessing. If therefore His first act be that

of restraint, the second is that of the projection of the full power of the Kingdom of God into the hearts of believers and consequently into the newly founded church. If the church has not always known how to utilize that power, the fault is not that of Christ or of the Holy Spirit, but of those who have failed implicitly to trust the promises of Christ. The great deed manifest in sending forth the Holy Spirit on Whitsunday is for the distinct purpose mentioned in the passage from Ephesians to which reference has already been made, "in order that he might fill all things," and this filling of all things by Christ is for no selfish reason, but in order that we may all attain "unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." And thus Christ has entered upon an era which beginning with the Ascension shall not be brought to its culmination until He shall come again to judge both the quick and the dead. The era is not to be one of doing only, but of teaching as well. The revelation of Jesus Christ to Saul includes not only an act in which He manifests Himself momentarily to a confused persecutor, but includes the sphere of teaching as well. The revelation of Jesus Christ to the beloved disciple upon the isle of Patmos and through him to the churches of Asia Minor and the churches of all times is evidence of the fulfilment of a longing desire "I have yet *many* things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." These things were revealed at least in part in those blessed post-resurrection days. They were further revealed by the Spirit after He had come upon them. They were revealed to us through the testimony of one to whom they were made known at the close of the apostolic age.

The ascension of Jesus Christ is a transitional act which marks the beginning of a new era for those who are Christ's. The first step in this transition is un-

doubtedly the testing of their faith in the message of the angels. It is interesting in this particular to contrast the message of Ascension day with the messages of Christmas day and Easter. When the angel upon Bethlehem's field said: "Fear not," etc., he added, "ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger." It required faith on the part of the shepherds to appropriate this message, but an easily and almost simultaneously verifiable faith. "They found both Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in the manger." The angel who announced the resurrection of Jesus added to his announcement the assurance, easily verifiable "He goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see Him, as He said unto you." But when the two men in white apparel address the dazed disciples looking into space, there is no comforting postscript or peroration concerning the immediate realization of their desire to be reunited. "This Jesus, who was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven." They are to return to Jerusalem where day after day is to be spent in watchful waiting. Surely their conduct during this period indicates the long distance they have traveled since their flight on the night of the betrayal. The first Christian prayer meetings in that upper chamber in Jerusalem are the assemblages of persons who have learned to believe and to pray. The first step in the new era for those who are Christ's is as we have said, the testing of their faith, the second is the awaiting of the promise in the spirit of prayer, the third is the actual outpouring of the Holy Spirit, their baptism in the Holy Spirit, as Jesus Himself has described it, and the fourth step is to be their witness bearing. Is not this experience of the first century repeated every year in an institution such as this? There are in this congregation men who in a

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few days will be graduated from this seminary.* The gospel message has come to them as a call. Their faith has been tested in the presentation to them of the Word of God, they have had to wait and pray and toil and wait. We trust that their ordination will be to them a veritable outpouring of the Holy Spirit, who alone can energize them for effective service and we know that if the Holy Spirit leads them into all truth, they cannot help but lead others into truth. Those of us who do not appreciate the value and significance of the new era heralded by this day as it affects those who are Christ's, are not Christ's. Hence the importance of the day, hence the importance of celebrating it as we are to celebrate it in receiving the Holy Communion.

We cannot turn from our consideration of the Ascension of Jesus Christ as a transitional act without noting that it marks the beginning of a new era for the world. We have said it marks the beginning of a new era for Christ and for those who are His. It is no less true that it marks a very distinct beginning in the history of the world. Though the new covenant begins with the Incarnation the realization of the meaning of the new covenant even on the part of the disciples does not begin with either the Incarnation or the Resurrection, but with the Ascension. Of course the full realization of the meaning of the new covenant does not take place until after the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, but there is a dawning in the minds of men concerning the meaning of the Life that has been lived and Ascension day has ever preached to the world a message concerning the restraining touch of the unseen world. Men have ever since hesitated to do some of the things they might otherwise have done. As nations they have con-

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*Preached at the Lutheran Theological Seminary, Mt. Airy, Philadelphia.

tinued to live lives not subject to restraint because as nations they have accepted commercial standards, not even commercial ideals. As men they have endeavored through foundations to repudiate what they have done as nations. After all, if the power of the unseen world cannot, in our day, grip both individuals and nations it is far more essential that it should grip individuals than nations, for salvation is not a matter of nations separately conceived, but of individuals, of individual souls, of individual souls in all nations.

As the world that now is has felt the restraining touch of the unseen world it has likewise felt its compelling touch. The message of Ascension day has come and will come with special force and significance to those who have been compelled to stand by the open grave. Surely Christianity has taught the world how not only to mourn but how to convert our mourning into a peace that passeth understanding and a joy that no man can take away. In many more ways do we note the influence of the Ascension upon the world, but especially in its quest for permanent values. The world itself is beginning to recognize the futility of much for which the Greek and Roman world stood. It is beginning to seek the few things rather than the many, the one thing rather than the few.

In speaking to the disciples the angels desired to arouse them from a purely physical exercise born of curiosity and consternation and regret to a spiritual exercise. The disciples would not have been rebuked had the angels found them engaged in prayer while in the act of looking heavenward. Nor did they imply as some would have us believe that their words "why stand ye looking into heaven" may be made the basis of a social service program. The spiritual exercise in which the disciples engaged after returning to the city might have been engaged in upon the mount. It would have immediately

accompanied and followed the ascension of Jesus if they had fully grasped the meaning of the deed. It is because we have at least partially grasped its meaning that we have assembled upon this mount for this service.

XXXVI.

SUNDAY AFTER ASCENSION DAY

JOHN 15: 26-27.

"When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall bear witness of me: and ye also bear witness."

Why is there such an accumulation of lessons from a comparatively few chapters of John for the Sundays after Easter? Is it because the forty days following the resurrection of our Lord constitute a transitional period during which emphasis must be placed upon the spiritual so little understood by the disciples and their descendants? Or is it because in the last discourses of our Lord there is contained such a wealth of thought it has been absolutely impossible to assimilate it while depressed with sorrow on the eve of the crucifixion? Is it not true that the fulness of detail in these last discourses is simply staggering and that we cannot gain a proper perspective of the Life of lives unless we trace the intimate connection between the passion, the resurrection, the forty days, the Ascension, and Whitsuntide as this relationship is carefully and minutely set forth in the first two lines of the Easter hymn: "The strife is o'er, the battle done! The victory of life is won!" to which must be added the third line: "The song of triumph hath begun." It is true the battle is o'er as we assemble on the day of resurrection. It is equally true that the song of triumph hath only been begun. It is essential to remember that unless we continue in our discipleship to the Mount and to the Holy City and then return to the duties of life thus newly interpreted the song of triumph has

little meaning either for us or those with whom we associate.

Entirely too many Christians look upon the Ascension of Jesus as a personal act in which He only is interested actively and they passively. They consider it His personal retirement from the scene of conflict after having won His battle. The Ascension is something infinitely more than that. It is an advancement of the whole cause of Christ, not only in heaven but also on earth. It is a necessary sequence, a continuance of the plan of salvation, a readjustment, a newness of relationship, a bright, bright hope, a recognition of human responsibility in the acknowledgement of the faith "Thence He shall come again to judge the quick and the dead." We are far too prone to discontinue the process of thought ere we have arrived at a logical conclusion. We are willing to say A but not B. Concentrated thought upon the life and purpose of Christ will at once convince us of the real significance of the Ascension in its various and vital phases, the first of which is the sending forth of the Holy Spirit. "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father, he shall bear witness of me." Do you see why in the light of this assertion of Christ it is necessary to review the last discourse? The life of Christ, the discourses of Christ, the miracles of Christ, the Spirit of Christ, not any one of these things can be properly understood except as the Spirit bearing witness illumines the message for us. The fall of man and the restoration of man are intimately interwoven in the significance of Ascension day and Whitsuntide. Joel made to experience the devastation of the land, calling the people to fasting and prayer obtains favor from Jehovah. The immediate promise is converted into a prophecy for humanity "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit

upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of Jehovah cometh. And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call upon the name of Jehovah shall be delivered." This is the promise emphasized by Isaiah in the thirty-second and forty-fourth chapters. This is the promise of the Father to which Jesus alludes in our text. It is the promise spoken of by Peter in the Pentecostal discourse "Having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear." Amid the rack and ruin of society there appeared unto the prophets a vision of restoration, heaven even here upon earth, a new order of affairs, supplanting an economy of law and destruction. There was a hope, a very well-founded hope that "whosoever shall call upon the Name of Jehovah shall be saved." But a power must be given unto men whereby they may call upon this Name. It was in order to obtain this power, surely not for Himself, that Christ came into the world, suffered and died and returned to the realm from which He had come. And the Father recognizing the validity of the claims of His only-begotten Son fulfilled the promise which had been ringing down through the ages. This sending forth of the Holy Spirit was to empower men to understand the Savior's love and mission and thus find life in His Name. "This is My beloved Son" was the testimony proclaimed to all who would hear at the Baptism of Jesus. The witness unto Christ is an essential element in Christian life. That witness has been made possible by the coming of the Holy Spirit. The

outpouring of the Holy Spirit was conditioned upon the return of the Son "whom I will send unto you." Hence the Ascension of Christ to the right hand of God assumes a supreme significance not readily nor always recognized and admitted.

We have said that through this act there is established a new relationship between the unseen and the seen, heaven and earth, the Creator and the creature. The old has passed away. All things have become new. The continued presence of Christ on earth after the completion of His mission was not essential. The appearance and continuance of Christ at the right hand of God there to continue to intercede for us is essential. The Ascension is the beginning of that movement finding its consummation on Whitsuntide whereby the barriers of race and nation are destroyed, and the promises once made to a people are reiterated authoritatively, strikingly and strongly to all the nations of the earth. The fragmentary manifestation of the Holy Spirit to those who accepted the covenant relationship of an offended God has been converted into the constant stream of blessing in which all flesh is offered an opportunity to become clean and to approach its God. The new relationship affects Father and Son, the Father willingly hearing and answering prayers in Jesus' name, the Son by His obedience and satisfaction having obtained recognition as the only valid intercessor between God and man, and being appointed Judge of the quick and the dead. The Spirit must abide by the will of the Son and must go forth upon His errand of mercy. In the new relationship man is not left without God. He is not less fortunate than the disciples. In the old covenant the manifestation of God was formal, outward, conformed to the limitations of Israel. During the earthly days of the Savior the transition was gradually to be made from that which is limited, formal, artificial, sacrificial to that

which partakes of less of the purely formal and more of the spiritual. The sacramental is emphasized. It is scarcely surprising that a revolution so pronounced should have left its impress upon radical thinkers, not willing to pursue the journey step by step and should have brought them to an apparently necessary rejection of all form. My relationship to the Savior should be all the more intense because I know that He is at this moment interceding for me and has sent the Holy Spirit to keep me from falling while He intercedes. Thus view the relationship as you will, either as the relationship sustained between Father and Son, Son and Spirit, Spirit and humanity, or the Father and humanity or the Son and humanity, the Ascension has intensified and reconstructed these relationships along larger, broader and more significant lines.

The Ascension stands for the establishment of headquarters not on earth nor in hell but in heaven. "Whom I will send unto you from the Father" indicates the realm to which Jesus is about to depart. Heaven cannot be geographically traced because heaven pertains to eternity not to time or space. To be with Jesus and the Father forever and ever, this is the meaning of heaven for me. The establishment of headquarters in heaven simply means the establishment of headquarters in eternity. There is to be no restriction in the intercourse and dwelling of Christ and there is to be no restriction in the intercourse and dwelling of those who, purchased by His blood, have heeded the call of the Spirit in their lives and await the translation which shall free them from the restraints of earth. There is an infinite value in this thought for those who believe in the immortality of the soul and who are consequently willing to be without the bodily presence of Christ for a little while in order that He may be permanently enjoyed by His own. To wish to hold Christ upon earth is the desire of those who have not fully sur-

rendered to Him. The presence of Jesus at the right hand of God is a guarantee of the fulfilment of every promise made by Him. But after all the significance of the Ascension is not rightly measured or understood unless we realize and admit that the sending forth of the Holy Spirit, the establishment of new relationships, the re-establishment of headquarters, all point to at least the temporary continuance of earthly relationships. He, the Savior, indicates that He must leave His disciples. He is to ascend to His Father and their Father. Why not take them with Him if He loves them? The question asked by the scoffer indicates that they have in His eyes become the stumbling-block and offence predicted by Christ. But you have heard so-called believers ask the question. You have heard them say if there be evil why shall not the disciples of Christ escape it? They are not in sympathy with it and it is wrong to make them suffer the results of it. I trust that no one here this morning has ever reasoned thus. Jesus indicates the continuance of disciples in the world and tells them plainly of the sufferings in store for them. If He knew this why not relieve them? O selfish egotist! wrapped up in personal desires and personal achievement. Have you never thought of the work the Holy Spirit has given you to do? There was a time when Jesus did it all and the disciples simply stood by and approved. All that has passed. Jesus has done it all. He has redeemed you! He has drawn you from sin to holiness, but He demands as much of you as was demanded of the disciples when He entrusted to them the duty and privilege of witness-bearing. The Ascension has placed new responsibilities upon your shoulders. You are the agents of the Holy Spirit and servants of Christ. If Christ takes you with Him from earth to heaven who is to give a cup of cold water to those who ask for it? Who is to carry the gospel to those who are without it at home and abroad?

Who is to feed the orphans and supply the wants of widows? Who is to build and supply the needs of our hospitals? Who is to speak a word of cheer to the man who is tired and footsore and ready to fall by the wayside? Who is to enter the homes of those who mourn the loss of their dead and tell them of the hope of everlasting life? Who is to lend sunshine and cheer and courage and assurance to a world sitting in the shadow of death? That is your business. And it is your business because of the Ascension of Jesus. Perhaps you too have gone with the disciples to the Mount. You have done it because of your love for the Master, but you must be aroused from your day-dream. "Ye men of Galilee why stand ye gazing up into heaven?" There is a work for you to do here and now. Why are you not doing it? The Ascension stands for the delegation of authority. The Son asks for the gift of the Holy Spirit and sends that Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit energizes the disciples and strengthens them for their witness-bearing. In like manner He energizes you and commits to you this trust. Witness-bearing costs something. It may mean that they shall put you out of the synagogues. It may mean that they will expel you from a narrow sect-belief or from the privileges of social intercourse. It may mean the laying down of your life for your Master, but what of that? The Master who demands also promises. The compensation here, a strong, Christ-like character able to do and die. The compensation there, eternity with Christ. The Ascension indicates the trust and the confidence which Christ places in you. He knows that Christianity will eventually triumph and He offers to you an opportunity to share in that triumph and its song. Christ says of the disciples, He says of you and me "ye also bear witness." Why not examine ourselves and ask the nature of the witness we bear?

XXXVII.

WHITSUNDAY.

JOHN 14:26.

"But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you."

Perhaps the most important document in the possession of the Christian Church not included in the canon of Holy Scripture, is the Apostles' Creed. Critics and apologists are united in this opinion, hence the great number of essays on this primitive confession of the early church. Whatever difference there may be concerning its original content or structure, faith in the Trinity is clearly postulated, faith in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. We cannot speak and we do not speak of the validity of the first two articles of the creed without adding the third, and it is this third article of the creed on which stress must be placed on this Whitsuntide morning. Is it essential or is it not? The question is not based on the permanent value of the creed so much as on the permanent value of Holy Scripture itself. If there is contained in this third article of the creed a biblical truth it has a permanent value. We repeat the words "I believe in God the Father" and we have at least a finite, limited idea of what they imply. We repeat the words "I believe in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord" and the horizon becomes very luminous. We repeat the words "I believe in the Holy Ghost" and let us be absolutely honest how many of us have ever searched Holy Scripture for an idea of the importance

of this statement. It may be well for us to pause a few moments while we consider

The Personality of the Holy Spirit.

There is much material on the work of the Holy Spirit as manifest in calling and sanctifying the believer. Luther has rightly emphasized the importance of the work of the Holy Spirit in his interpretation of the third article of the creed. It may be well to repeat that interpretation at this point lest we forget: "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me through the gospel, enlightened me by his gifts, and sanctified and preserved me in the true faith; in like manner as He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and preserves it in union with Jesus Christ in the true faith; in which Christian church He daily forgives abundantly all my sins, and the sins of all believers, and will raise up me and all the dead at the last day, and will grant everlasting life to me and to all who believe in Christ. This is most certainly true." The work of the Holy Spirit is more important than His person. The laborer, if he be efficient, will voluntarily sacrifice his personality in the interests of his task. He will remain in the background. In fact, the more efficient he is, the less obtrusive will his personality be. The Holy Spirit is distinctly a worker. It is His work rather than His person that needs to be emphasized. And yet in quoting and re-quoting Luther's interpretation of the third article of the creed we become more and more convinced that to Luther as to every true Christian the Holy Spirit must be a very real person. It is because we must be in sympathy with Holy Scripture, it is because we must turn to it again and again in our discussion that on this day there is a clearer line of cleavage than anywhere else between those who accept

and those who reject the gospel for this day. It is because reason does not help us in the solution of our problem, but only our experience in personal contact with the third person of the Trinity, an experience which accords with the promises of Jesus, that this gospel means so little for children of this world.

What do we mean in speaking of personality as applied to God? It may be interesting to ask some of the systems round about us of a non-Christian type before discussing the subject from the Christian standpoint. For instance, pantheism treats of God and the world as one and the same thing. Spinoza says there is but one substance and this substance he calls God. He ridicules the idea that personality may be ascribed to God by saying "definition is negation." Materialism claims that matter can explain everything. There was no creation, it says, for matter is eternal. There is no providence required as the free movement of the atoms is sufficient. In other words, materialism says there is no personal God. It claims it needs none. The Deist believes there is a God, but his God having created the world remains aloof from that world and from man. What a haughty personality such a God must be! There is much need in such a system for the hymn "Nearer My God to Thee." Standing out boldly and forcibly in open protest against views such as these is the Christian conception of the personality of God. It is not in sympathy with the cold, rigid attempts to introduce a philosophy invented by the mind of man to take the place of the true philosophy of life which we have in Christ Jesus. In speaking of God as a person we do so because we cannot do otherwise. We have thus learned to know Him and He has thus manifested Himself unto us. In speaking of God as a person the Christian acknowledges his subordination, his willing subordination to perfect, spiritual, omnipotent personality in Him Whom we term God. Personality

is self-conscious essence and implies spirit rather than body, thought rather than extension. When I say God is a personal God I distinguish Him from the idols of the heathen. I cannot conscientiously fall down before a god made of stone or wood, mutilate myself, inflict all sorts of torment and in doing so cry out: "Baal hear me, Baal hear me." I know that Baal, though he has ears, hears not and though he has grotesque eyes, sees not, and though he has a misshapen mouth cannot speak. Others may imagine personality there, I cannot bring myself to acknowledge as much. My spirit accords with that of Paul who says: "Being then the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and device of man." The Athenians themselves recognize the unsatisfactory nature of their worship, for they ascribe homage "to an unknown God." This "God is a spirit and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." In summarizing these views concerning what God is as over against what He is not it may be sufficient to say that the God of the Christian is a conscious, thoughtful, loving Providence Who cares for us far more efficiently than we imagine. The very fact that God is so infinitely above us makes it difficult to describe Him accurately. Man's sinfulness makes it impossible to approach Him adequately. God recognizes this condition in sending forth His Son and we have an opportunity of becoming intimately acquainted with the unique personality of Christ. Now we are beginning to tread on more familiar ground. We can speak more authoritatively for whereas no man hath ever seen the Father, we have seen the Son Whose glory we beheld, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. These are the distinguishing traits, so preeminent in the Person of Christ—grace and truth. The former is the feminine quality without which there can

be no true home, no true affection, no true friendship. Grace is transparent beauty, not dependent upon goodliness of countenance, but deeply dependent upon goodliness of heart. Grace means sympathy, co-operation, love. It means self-sacrifice, perfect submission to the will of another. It means a domination over others by example rather than by precept. It is the embodiment of the gospel rather than of the law. It is the poetry of life distinguished from its prose. Grace in mankind is supremely beautiful. Grace refulgent in incarnate Deity is sublime. It blots earth from earth.

As grace is the feminine quality in the person of Christ, truth is its masculine counterpart. Truth implies certainty. Certainty implies strength. Strength implies victory. "The truth shall make you free" is no empty promise. Truth is not always a desirable factor to those steeped in iniquity. Truth sent John the Baptist to his death. Truth crucified the Savior. Truth will continue to be a stumbling block to the end of time, but eventually it must set us free as it has already accomplished this end in the death of Christ. Truth may be recognized by its fearless dependence upon God. It stands in the very jaws of death and bids them contract. It is this heroic element that wins the admiration of the world, a late tribute in many instances, but a final vindication. The entire subjection of life to either grace or truth to the exclusion of one or the other produces a very one-sided personality. The reason why Jesus Christ stands forth as the only perfect personality clothed in human form is because of the inclusion of grace and truth in that personality in perfect balance. Alike the strength and beauty of the life of Christ appeal to us. We are fond of those pictures which properly blend the two. We hang them upon our walls. We have them engraved within our hearts. In holding intercourse with the Father we approach Him through the Son. There is

nothing vague about this person of the God-man. We have a distinct, tangible conception. It may be a bit erroneous in each one of us because of our limitations and our inability even to grasp the Godhead incarnate, but it is sufficiently clear to permit us to feel that we know Him and knowing, love Him. He is real, incarnate, living. We have no doubts upon this score. Our journey to the real center of the gospel lesson for this day has been long and perhaps tedious to some, but it has been a necessary journey for, after all, there is a close connection between Whitsunday and Trinity Sunday and we cannot grasp the significance of the person or work of the Holy Spirit unless we consider Him in connection with the Father and the Son. The journey, though perhaps a bit tedious, has been over charted routes. To how many of us is the discussion of the personality of the Holy Spirit a charted route? We engage earnestly in singing the hymn which is so dear to us:

> "Come, o come, Thou quickening Spirit,
> Thou forever art divine:
> Let Thy power never fail me,
> Always fill this heart of mine:
> Thus shall grace and truth and light
> Dissipate the gloom of night."

Let us stop to analyze our feelings as we sing this hymn. The line "always fill this heart of mine" seems to convey our sentiment most adequately. We believe there is an overshadowing by some mighty power, but further than this we dare not advance. When asked for a definition of the Holy Spirit we almost unconsciously revert to the symbol of the dove or the symbol of the tongues of fire. And yet we are clearly told these are symbols. There is something more than the rushing of a mighty wind. There is the presence and predominance of personality. To this Jesus refers clearly in saying:

"But when the Comforter is come, Whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall bear witness of me." We are coming to the point of it all. Just as truly as I am to think of the Father and the Son as persons, so also am I to look upon the Holy Spirit. He has come into this world just as truly as Jesus has come into it. He associated Himself with the individual believer long before the great Whitsuntide outpouring just as truly as the Son revealed Himself to prophets and saints of the old covenant. The Holy Spirit is referred to by Job as Creator: "the Spirit of God has made me." He is spoken of as present everywhere in the Psalms. John looks upon Him as the author of the new birth. The Acts of the Apostles record at length His sphere in guiding and watching over the servants of Christ. What has already been said of the personality of Jesus applies with equal force to the person of the Spirit. If we are taught to look upon Christ as the embodiment of grace and truth we are equally taught to look upon the Holy Spirit as the Comforter. The disciples are lonely without Christ. They are not sufficiently strong to stand without support. We too are lonely without Christ. We need someone to stand by us. As the promise came to them it comes to us. As they needed more than an abstract principle, we need more than that. As feeling or emotion would not suffice for them, it will not suffice for us. The Holy Spirit is constantly by our side. It is His unseen presence that strengthens us in weakness, comforts us in sickness and in sorrow, and restores to life powers that are nigh unto exhaustion. This task of comforting is the feminine power, as Spirit of truth He asserts His masculine strength. In this capacity He strives with sinners. He is vexed. He reproves the world. How terrible is the judgment visited upon Ananias and Sapphira because

they agree to tempt the Spirit of the Lord and how stinging the rebuke of Peter: "Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?" If we are to look upon the Holy Ghost as the person nearest to us, for it is He Who leads to Christ just as truly as the Son leads us to the Father, does that not change and intensify our conception of Him? Does it not make us love Him as we love our Lord Jesus? Does this not prompt us to be co-workers with Him in bringing others to Christ?

XXXVIII.

TRINITY SUNDAY.

JOHN 3:3.

"Except one be born anew, he can not see the kingdom of God."

We read somewhere in the narrative of the first three evangelists of a busy Galilean evening spent by Jesus in healing the sick that were brought to Him. It is interesting to compare that Galilean evening with the evening spent in or near Jerusalem, the narrative of which is preserved for us by John. How true to the customs and the life of the north and the south these two stories are. In the story before us we are told that Jesus had come to Jerusalem for the celebration of the passover. On His arrival at the temple He found wholly unwarrantable and unjustifiable conditions, a picture of barter and of trade instead of true sacrifice and true worship. It took little time to decide what must be His program under these circumstances. It took little time to drive out both the animals and those who sold them. Drastic action such as He engaged in immediately brought forth from the Jews a challenge to prove His authority by a sign, and Jesus answered them by saying, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up," speaking, as we know, of the temple of His body. During His sojourn in Jerusalem He manifested Himself by many signs and we are told that many believed on Him. The second chapter of John from which we have quoted and which forms the prelude to the evening scene about to be described, closes with the significant words "But Jesus did not trust himself unto them, for that he knew all

men, and because he needed not that any one should bear witness concerning man; for he himself knew what was in man." These words are a proper interlude leading us from the busy routine of the day to the meditative seclusion of the evening.

We do not know where the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, a member of the Sanhedrin, took place. Some have suggested it was in the city itself, perhaps in the home of John, the narrator of the incident; others say it was at Bethany, in a home in which Jesus tarried during His southern Jerusalem sojourn. Whether in the city or out of the city does not matter. Seated in the upper room, the guest chamber, approachable by a staircase from the outside, the Savior of men was accessible even during the hours of the evening and the night to seekers after truth. Nicodemus is such a seeker. He has overcome many scruples in His willingness to come to Jesus. He has placed himself in a rather compromising and dangerous position. The storm is already lowering. There are threatening clouds upon the horizon. The rulers of the people have secretly discussed the person, the teaching and the deeds of this strange man, who has appeared as the Messiah. They have been unable to convince themselves concerning either Him or His message. The statements of Nicodemus reveal as much. In spite of the hostile attitude assumed by his colleagues Nicodemus is anxious to investigate further, to have first-hand information, and with this purpose in view he risks his prestige and his standing with his colleagues and sets forth on his secret embassy. The first thing of importance is that truly seeking Jesus he finds Him and finds the Rabbi, as he addresses him, willing to discuss his problem with him, perhaps not as he thought that problem would be discussed, but far more thoroughly, far more thoughtfully, far more earnestly. That Nicodemus

realized the earnestness and the sincerity of Jesus is manifest in his after life, of which two incidents are recorded by John. The great question that agitated the Sanhedrin in its thought concerning Jesus was voiced by Nicodemus in his salutation: "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God." The Sanhedrin was again confronted with the question of orthodoxy or heterodoxy. Secretly it had admitted His orthodoxy and rested its conclusion on His ability to do approved signs, signs which in its opinion, no one could do except God were with him. In answer to this salutation Jesus said: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God." In the silence of the night, disturbed only by the occasional whisper of the wind, two persons are seated in that upper room by the glimmering light, one of them the representative of a light that faileth, the other Himself the Light that is to lighten the world; one of them already an aged man, the representative of the old covenant, the other a young man, the representative of the new covenant. The aged man has come to place himself at the feet of the young man. It may be interesting and helpful to follow the conversation and back of that the thoughts of these two representatives of covenants with God on the basis of the introductory utterance of Jesus "Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Nicodemus belonged to those Pharisees who though they had gone forth into the desert to hear John and though the message concerning the baptism unto repentance had been addressed to them as well as to others, held aloof from baptism itself, believing it to be humiliating and unnecessary for them as rulers of the people to subject themselves to this, to them, superfluous act. Luke tells us: "And all the people when they heard, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and the lawyers re-

jected for themselves the counsel of God, being not baptized of him." They based the claims of the spiritual life upon several considerations. They needed no single act to bring about this covenant relationship for they were the children of Abraham. Their insistence upon this test was so pronounced and so conclusive to them, our Lord believed it worth His while to point out the fallacy of their argument. No blood-relationship, no human ties, He would say to them constitute a legitimate test of membership in the Kingdom of God. Abraham himself would repudiate many of his children, or rather the religion of many of his descendants, for his religion was one of faith whereas their religion was one of inheritance with other equally extraneous elements added. And so Jesus would say to us there is an old covenant attitude even today, the attitude of those who have never fought the battles of the fathers, have never thought their thoughts, have never attempted to live over again their lives and yet are satisfied to be called children of these heroes. Jesus would not repudiate the past. He understood it in its relationship to the history of the kingdom. He would do two things for the children of His age and our age. He would emphasize its proper appreciation and reject a false dependence upon supposed inherited rights.

Nicodemus went a step farther. He not only rejected Christ's teaching concerning regeneration because he was a descendant of Abraham, but also because he had been trained in the Mosaic law. This law at all times spoke to the conscience and heart of Israel. But this law could not be grasped in its entirety by any one man, least of all at the very beginning of his avowed religious life. Orthodoxy to a man like Nicodemus depended upon an appreciation of the Mosaic law. A man of his mould and school could not speak of the new life or the new birth save as a process. He who was

most learned in the law and the prophets was, to a man like Nicodemus, most religious. Hence a man might gradually acquire holiness, the new life, the new birth, but he could not suddenly be a new creature. You can see how startling the answer of Christ was to a man so trained. And again, Nicodemus though a Pharisee and perhaps a bit at variance with the priestly class, nevertheless accepted Israel's sacrificial system. Now there is such a great difference between the work religion into which Israel had fallen through its sacrificial observances, many of which were not commanded by God, but were superimposed by the priests and the religion of which Jesus was the exponent that we must not deal too harshly with Nicodemus for his inability at once to comprehend the radical change advocated by our Lord. Nor does Jesus condemn his lack of comprehension, what He does condemn is his lack of faith as He must condemn the lack of faith in all those whose religion sinks to the level of visible rites and ceremonials. Nicodemus stood for signs. He admitted as much. He stood for the conversion of religious life and experience into visible proofs. The proof might have been the turning of stones into bread, the outward demonstration of angelic support in the performance of a wondrous feat, or even the cure of the sick. The sign might have been a mere token of power, able to satisfy the curious or confirm the validity of the religion of Moses and Elijah. To a man like Nicodemus, of course, the sign was a sign and not all signs were held to be valid. He speaks of "these signs" as peculiar and remarkable demonstrations of power, but even to him there was too much of the purely objective in it all. The signs and the religion had repeatedly been compared, but the signs and the religion had not been applied to the individual in the deepest needs of his heart and life. Jesus' answer to such as Nicodemus is unequivocal. You need something more

than signs, something more than work-righteousness, something more than environment and heredity. You need the Spirit.

Those who have studied the original text have debated earnestly concerning the meaning of the word which in our English translation is rendered anew. It so happens that the word may mean either *ANEW* or from above. Jesus undoubtedly had both ideas in mind when He used the term. They are not mutually exclusive. They supplement each other. They help us to understand what Jesus meant. Here was an old man before Him, a man trained in Israel's law, a man whose test is that of sight. Jesus accepts the challenge. He says to him: "Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God." He too would make of religion a visible thing. The kingdom of God, according to Jesus, can be seen, but not as Nicodemus desired to see it. It can be seen only by a limited number of even those who believed themselves to be its members. Jesus' test as over against that of Nicodemus was the new birth—the birth from above. Nicodemus' question in answer to the reply of Christ proves again how completely he moves in the realm of the visible, the material, the fleshly, how could he, an old man, begin life over again if he would? The thing is simply impossible. The thought which has dominated his mind concerning his Abrahamic descent has filled him with ancestral pride. His forbears have been worthy types. He has not gone far enough back in working out the ancestral tree. He has not included even some of his more immediate ancestry. He has never thought of the question of original sin or of human depravity in its baneful influences upon his life. The message of Jesus to His age repeated over and over again is that true life does not emanate from Abraham or from Moses, from sacrifice or self-mortification, but simply and solely from God

who sends His Holy Spirit into the hearts of men. The new life made possible by Christ, the life that is to be pictured in the season which begins today must itself have a beginning and that beginning is neither our fleshly birth nor our personal endeavor, however intense such an endeavor may be, but the coming of the Spirit into our life. This coming of the Spirit into the life of man is unseen to the eye for that is the meaning of Jesus, whether you render it "the wind blowing where it will" or "the Spirit breatheth where it will." Undoubtedly the revisers of the English Bible have acted wisely in preserving the figure of the wind in the original, inserting the supplementary reading in the margin. Nicodemus has asked for signs. In the conversation of which what is preserved to us is undoubtedly only a concise summary, Jesus has spoken of earthly things which are types of heavenly things.

He has spoken of the wind, one of the most marvelous of God's agents. Have you ever stood with the sailor whose duty it is to note the manifestations of this unseen agent? He hears the voice thereof. He marks the direction thereof. He notes its velocity. All these things so utterly unintelligible to you and me are part of his daily life and yet he has never seen this messenger. He has seen its results, but the messenger has ever remained unseen. This is a natural thing, illustrative of a supernatural thing, the work of God's Spirit as He goes about as His Messenger. Just as the sailor sees the wind by faith so there are children of God who see the Spirit and the manifestations of the Spirit and thus see the Kingdom of God. Does this radical teaching, as it appeared to Nicodemus, justify his drifting from all moorings, his cutting loose from all human associations? Suppose he accepts the definition of Jesus, has he any right to lead the life of a mystic monk, shut off from the world, or has he any right to disassociate

himself from the visible church as the human counterpart of the invisible Kingdom? Jesus again answers the question: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except one be born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." You may say the cleansing by water was an individual act, not a corporate act. Yes, that is true. Ezekiel emphasizes that when he says of the old covenant ceremony: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." He is speaking of Israel conjointly, but He is thinking undoubtedly of the individuals who constitute the Israelitic people. And Paul says to his young friend Titus, "According to his mercy he saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit." But they who are thus born of water and the Spirit, truly born of water and the Spirit, are one and must seek to realize their oneness even here and now. As we have already seen, Nicodemus resisted baptism. His pride separated him from those acknowledged by the Master to be his true children. The direct testimony of Jesus is that the birth of the Spirit is not sufficient. On the other hand, He testifies that an outward rite or ordinance, however ancient and legally authoritative, will not do. He excludes Israel after the flesh. He excludes fanatics after the Spirit.

Is it not eminently appropriate that this lesson has been selected for this day, a day on which we summarize the teaching of the Sundays that have passed, a teaching concerning God the Father who of His great love gave His only-begotten Son, a teaching concerning God the Son who was lifted up; "that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life" and a teaching concerning the Spirit through whose grace we are

brought into fellowship with the Father and the Son? As we ponder upon the lessons of the festival half of the church-year we pray that if we have not been born anew God may send His Spirit into our hearts and bring about a regeneration in our lives that shall permit us to see the Kingdom of God.

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